

EDITORIAL TO PREVENT A TRAGEDY

In the wake of the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse, Texas A&M has learned the hard way that tragedy can take place on this campus. It is important for students to remember that danger exists even in events meant for fun and unity, and care must be taken to avoid future injuries or deaths to our fellow students. It is for this reason that the apathy surrounding the alleged Corps hazing incident is so dangerous to A&M and its community.

The activities captured in the photographs discovered on the AggieLand server depict a cadet, bound and gagged, who was clearly in danger of injury. While this has been said to be a case of "boys being boys," the dangers inherent in binding a student's arms and legs with duct tape cannot be ignored. Had the cadet begun to choke or had any other medical emergency occurred, he would have had no way to help himself or clearly communicate his needs to his companions. While it is fortunate that the cadet emerged unscathed, the dangers of such behavior should not be ignored.

If the University decides the incident was hazing, it is important that it reacts swiftly and justly in response to the evidence discovered. It must make clear to all students — not just the members of the Corps of Cadets — that such reckless disregard for another student's safety will not be tolerated. If the University decides the incident was not hazing, it must then inform students exactly what constitutes hazing. If this incident is swept under the rug and quietly set aside, such behavior will continue until someone dies. In order for the University to prevent tragedy from visiting the A&M campus unnecessarily, it must make a strong statement against hazing and the dangers it presents to all members of the student body.

THE BATTALION

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MAIL CALL

Program was too controversial for kids

In response to Jenelle Wilson's June 26 column:

I disagree with Nickelodeon's program choice for many reasons, but for the sake of brevity you have left the strictly moral issues to others.

The main, though underlying, issue here is whose job it should be to educate young people about moral and social issues, and how that education should happen. Wilson did a good job of explaining that the program was about tolerance instead of homosexuality.

However, I am sure that responsible parents would rather explain these issues to their children themselves, instead of letting a kids' news program do the job for them. Children and teenagers are impressionable. If anyone has a right to explain homosexuality and tolerance to them, and I've explained in a certain way, it should be parents and not Nickelodeon.

This program, even if it was about tolerance, was still very controversial. Parents have a reasonable expectancy, though, for non-controversial programming on kids' networks. There are places for controversial programming, but parents should not have to worry about a controversial subject popping up on kids' channel. Nickelodeon is trying to take over the role of parent with this series, and it should not be.

If Nickelodeon wants to be controversial, that is their decision. If they want to address nature issues on a kids' network, they will reap both the benefits and consequences. But parents should in no way be faulted for expressing their disapproval, and doing what they can to stop it.

Jonathan Drum
Class of 2001

Orson Scott Card was not an expert

In response to Jennifer Lozano's June 25 column:

Despite the lack of respect Ms. Lozano shows for the rights of a person to decide their own religious beliefs, her article "Maintaining the Faith" was a desperate grasp at news fallen tragically short.

First, I think it is important to highlight a fact Ms. Lozano conveniently left out. The author she based her arguments on, Orson Scott Card, is a science fiction writer. He is not a theologian, expert on political science and certainly not a behavioral anthropologist or zoologist. To base a religious argument on an unnamed scientific study, cited by an author who specializes in Star Trek-like fiction is absurd. Such rationale on Ms. Lozano's part is very discrediting, and in short, a poor reflection on her and *The Battalion*.

Second, in citing Card, she mentions a study of chimpanzees. Who conducted the study? When? Where? What do chimps have to do with Jesus? This non sequitur comparison of chimp and human behavior defies logic and common sense. To hold two such completely different species accountable to the same code of conduct is childish, ridiculous and shows a complete lack of rational thought. Apparently the author found it appropriate to use a scientific study without justification of its connection or relevance.

Third, in the last paragraph, Ms. Lozano states a case against the abolishment of organized religion. Who said anything about abolishing religion? I thought the issue was young people abandoning religion, not rallying to wipe it off the face of the earth.

James Bell
Class of 2003

A profitable position

Political officeholders making millions from speeches

In former President John F. Kennedy's unforgettable inaugural address he stated: "Ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country." Most of the founding fathers of the United States went bankrupt serving their country — Thomas Jefferson even died broke. That is not to say bankruptcy or any amount of money can accurately measure the degree of dedication a politician possesses. But it does prove the founding fathers did everything in their power to serve this country; these ardent men gave themselves entirely (pocketbooks included) to a cause in which they fervently believed. Modern politicians regularly find themselves in a fiscal situation completely opposite of bankruptcy, forcing one to wonder what it means to be a public servant today.

While in office, presidents serve the American public selflessly. The trademark wrinkles, gray hairs and tired eyes of many American presidents reflect the tremendous burden of responsibility they must carry. Presidents must work hard to attain a crucial mixture of personal characteristics in order to best serve their constituents, such as the ability to balance optimism with realism. Presidents frequently receive the brunt of responsibility for things largely out of their control: the whimsical stock market, activities of foreign countries and even the well-being and contentment of every



LINDSYE FORSON

former President Bill Clinton was paid \$9.2 million for making 59 speeches and \$450,000 to speak at one event in Tokyo alone. Clinton also reportedly received an advance in excess of \$10 million for a book deal; his wife, New York Senator Hillary Clinton, will also be paid an \$8 million advance for publishing her memoirs. According to the *New York Times*, the Clintons' largest asset is their \$5 to \$25 million account at Citibank.

Other former presidents have also received lush royalties since leaving office. Former President George H. Bush has received millions of dollars for speeches, reportedly charging \$80,000 per speech. Ronald Reagan received \$2 million for one series of speaking engagements, according to the *New York Times*. The *Times* also reports other politicians have "struck it rich" thanks to a political career.

One such person is current Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Rumsfeld also served under former President Gerald Ford. After holding this prestigious political office and before returning to the White House to serve under President George W. Bush, Rumsfeld made millions of dollars working in high-ranking positions at several corporations. Rumsfeld is not alone in this experience; many others have found the

respect and prestige associated with a political career to be very useful credentials in the business world. The list of rich politicians is seemingly endless.

Whether the potential financial opportunities were motivating factors in these men and women's political careers is impossible to say. However, it seems clear that for many, fame, wealth and celebrity status are an inseparable part of holding political office today, making it difficult to determine how many politicians actually perform their jobs solely as an act of public service.

The American president is supposed to represent and embody the "common man" and the founding fathers designed the presidential office as such to try to escape the opulent monarchy that ruled England. The fact that the presidency has become an incredibly lucrative business opportunity poses a severe threat to the integrity of the office, and therefore, the country. It could easily tempt individuals with malevolent motives to seek political office as an avenue to financial success. The men who seek political office should do so for the sake of serving the American people, and helping to uphold the noble principles for which America stands.

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American citizen. Make no mistake — political office is a great act of service to this country.

Once presidents leave office, however, their situations change entirely. While they retain their fair share of limelight, the attention former presidents receive from the media is usually at charity balls, ribbon cuttings and various speaking events, not from a televised State of the Union address. The price tag on these public appearances drastically changes once a president leaves office; it is not unusual for politicians to gain millions of dollars as a direct result of their political career. Last year alone,



JEFF SMITH • THE BATTALION

Administrator should not teach

Vice principal lifted girls' skirts at dance to check for thongs

As if high school dances were not embarrassing enough, Rita Wilson, an assistant principal at Rancho Bernardo High School in California, just made them infinitely worse. According to CNN, at an informal dance near the end of the school year, Wilson performed mandatory thong checks by lifting up girls' skirts upon entering the school dance. If a girl was wearing a thong, she was not permitted into the dance and was ordered to go home and change her underwear. To make the situation even more humiliating, Wilson's thong checks were done in front of others including male students and faculty.

After outraged parents and students complained, Wilson was investigated and put on administrative leave. When the charges were confirmed, Wilson was merely demoted to a teaching position. This "punishment," which is almost as outrageous as the violation committed, makes a mockery of the students' rights and needs to be amended expeditiously.

According to CNN, the reason behind Wilson's intrusive thong checking was to prevent potential sexual assault that she felt might occur with revealing clothing and suggestive dancing. This principle may apply with outstanding validity in reference to the length of a skirt, a pair of

shorts or the revealing nature of a blouse or shirt; however, as its name suggests, underwear is supposed to be worn beneath other garments and thus cannot be the cause of revealing clothing. Even if

girls were lifting up their skirts on purpose to reveal their thongs at school dances, the appropriate avenue to curtail this practice would not include checking every girl for thongs at the entrance of a school dance. In addition, parents and students claim that nowhere in the school dress code is there anything stated that prohibits wearing thong underwear.

Merely demoting Wilson to a teaching position in which she will have more interaction with students does little to serve as a good example for students or to help students regain trust in this assistant principal. Instead, it shows students that when one grossly oversteps the bounds of one's authority and violates others' personal rights, they are "punished" with temporary leave and a demotion to a position with even more contact with the violated population. The only statement that this reprimand makes is one of mockery and humiliation surrounding the Rancho Bernardo school district.

Rancho Bernardo students' trust in their faculty — and especially in Wilson — has definitely been shaken. "The vice

principal is supposed to be there to help students, but when she is violating her authority then that's kind of questionable," said Rancho Bernardo student Emma Schoppe to NBC San Diego. Now, some students will have to regain their trust in her as students in her class, a very intricate and important relationship. Although many parents are pushing for Wilson's resignation and have threatened, in typical California fashion, to sue if she refuses, a simple probation period during which she would be under much surveillance would be a good place to start in order to help parents and students regain confidence in the school system. However, that does not seem to be an option for school officials at Rancho Bernardo High School.

It is clear that Wilson overstepped her bounds as a well-intentioned administrator and should face adequate consequences. According to NBC San Diego, 87 percent polled agree that screening for thongs before school dances violates students' rights. Whether a student decides to wear a thong or not should be between the student and the parent and should not involve a school administrator. In an attempt to prevent sexual assault or not, there is nothing to justify Wilson's intrusive and humiliating acts.

Jennifer Lozano is a senior English major.