

MAIL CALL

Corps block is an important tradition

In response to Collins Ezeanyim's Oct. 21 column:

I think that it is fair to say that Mr. Ezeanyim does not understand some of the issues that he discussed in his article that very clearly chastised the Corps of Cadets. Frankly, I could not care less about his feeling towards Corps block. I also do not care when people gripe about how the Corps juniors get to be on the field for Yell Practice or how Corps fish get to tackle the yell leaders. We work hard to be able to have these privileges and I am unapologetic in that regard. If you want to be able to do these things, then by all means join the Corps of Cadets. What I take issue with is the fact that Ezeanyim would have the nerve to attack the Corps for hurting campus unity. Writing a huge spread on how the Corps is bad for this reason would seem to me to be a greater injury to campus unity than anything that the Corps does. Just because we have privileges does not mean that we did not earn them.

Finally, regarding the Red, White, and Blue Out, I have one thing to say. It is very nice that the student body did such a thing to show support. But the point must be made again for the sake of people like Ezeanyim: Those Aggies that have died fighting for this country died wearing a uniform not too different from the one that the Corps of Cadets wears. I challenge Ezeanyim to take an objective look at how much the Corps of Cadets, especially those cadets that are contracted to serve in our nation's Armed Forces, do for this school and for this nation.

Justin Lee
Class of 2003

Rather, I was made to feel welcome and was allowed to represent the 12th Man to the best of my abilities. So before Collins judges the members of the Corps block, I would like to challenge him to befriend a cadet and take the opportunity to sit there.

The truth of the matter is, it does not matter where you are sitting or who you're sitting with at a football game. We on the East side of Kyle Field are all a part of the Aggie family. Whether we're wearing khaki, maroon or purple, the important thing is that we are standing and yelling for the same purpose, and that is to support our team.

Mary Masch
Class of 2003

NRA did not deserve criticism in cartoon

I request that you issue an apology for printing the Luckovich cartoon suggesting that the National Rifle Association is a terrorist organization.

The NRA is the number one firearms safety education group in America, if not the world, and responsible gun ownership is one of the primary tenets of its membership. By defending the Constitution (not just the Second Amendment), the NRA defends freedom and human rights for all Americans, and indeed for all people.

The existing gun control laws in and around Maryland — among the most stringent in the nation — have done nothing to stop the sniper and those of his ilk, and it is absurd, even dangerous, to suggest that the answer is even more gun control laws. All available evidence, worldwide, shows that criminals will always find a way to obtain guns with which to commit crimes. It seems, though, that you would rather slander law-abiding Americans than punish criminals. It is a shame that gun control fanatics are so eager to exploit human suffering to further their attack on our Constitutional rights ... but they are, and that is one important reason why my NRA membership dues are kept up-to-date.

Jon L. Gardner
Department of Food Services

Bonfire is worthy of coverage at A&M

In response to an Oct. 21 mail call:

Bonfire is not just a "pile of sticks." It is one of the many rich and probably most favored traditions by students here in Aggieland. I know this and was offended by your comments even though I've never seen Bonfire and am a fish at A&M. I think that a "newsworthy event," as you called it, can be in a paper, such as the "atrocities being committed in Zimbabwe," along with an article about Bonfire. If you want news not in Aggieland, subscribe to a bigger paper, such as the *Dallas Morning News*, the *Houston Chronicle* or the *New York Times*.

Katherine Alexander
Class of 2006

A poorly behaved guest

Chinese president trying to bully the United States

Few people had reason to rejoice after Sept. 11, but there were a few who did. Palestinians danced in their streets, Gary Condit slipped from the front pages to the gossip columns and pressure eased off of China, perhaps America's foremost post-Cold War threat.



MATTHEW MADDOX

China's communist leader Jiang Zemin will make a rare appearance in College Station Thursday under the auspices of friendship. Not since Yasser Arafat has such a mischaracterized leader met with the president. It is only due to China's status as a potential economic market and potential diplomatic disaster that Zemin is consulted. China's government must be recognized for what it is: the missing member of President Bush's "Axis of Evil."

Contrary to current proposals, the United States should not lift military sanctions against the Chinese government. In 1989, the world watched as a student-led protest in favor of democracy surfaced in China. In the public area known as Tiananmen Square, student protestors were viciously suppressed with military tanks, resulting in the deaths of more than 500 civilians, according to declassified U.S. intelligence reports. After the massacre, Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping fired subordinates he believed were too kind towards the protestors, according to CNN. In this power vacuum, Jiang Zemin rose to the top of the communist party and, later, the country. There are numerous reasons why, under this current leadership, China should not be considered a friend.

In an unusual display of interest in democracy, three Chinese nationals were found to have funneled money into the Democratic National Committee prior to the 1996 presidential election through false companies and aliases.

One of those convicted, Charlie Trie, admitted in a congressional hearing to procuring germ warfare material for China, according to NewsMax.

More recently, China displayed hostility during an April 2001 downing of a slow-flying U.S. surveillance plane operating over the South China Sea. The aircraft was struck by a Chinese fighter jet, forcing the plane to land in Chinese territory. For nearly two weeks, the 24-person crew was held hostage until it was ransomed by a U.S. government apology. *The Washington Post* reports that Chinese aggression towards U.S. planes in international airspace has increased this year.

China's behavior in regard to human rights is appalling. Last summer, President Bush withdrew \$34 million from the U.N. Population Fund despite the cries of American feminists. His reasoning: the funds were supporting forced sterilizations and abortions in China. The Chinese government has ordered one of its regions to perform 20,000 abortions by the end of 2002, according to the *U.K. Telegraph*.

Guaranteed to be an issue this week is Falun Gong, a group that partakes in spiritual and physical exercise similar to yoga and was outlawed in China in 1999. According to the group's Web site, more than 1,600 practitioners have been killed by the Chinese government and more than 20,000 were sent to labor camps. Up to 3,000 followers of Falun Gong may protest Zemin's visit to the Bush Library, according to an interview in *The Eagle* with University Police Department Director Bob Wiatt.

For security at the Falun Gong protest, which takes the form of peaceful meditation, a seemingly excessive eight local, federal, and foreign security agencies will be in attendance. In a fashion that has been increasingly questioned for First Amendment reasons, the protestors will be only allowed in "free speech zones."

"The Chinese government, not content with persecuting the Falun Gong in China, has (urged) local U.S. officials to shun or even persecute them right here in America," a Feb. 21 *Wall Street*



RUBEN DELUNA • THE BATTALION

Journal article said. "The approach ... tends to combine gross disinformation with scare tactics and, in some cases, slyly implied diplomatic and commercial pressure." Sadly, Thursday's events may come to reflect the communist Chinese stance on freedom, not America's.

The largest point of contention between America and China is Taiwan, a democratic island country off the coast of China, which has much in common with Israel. Its lands are claimed by undemocratic powers and its survival is dependent on the United States.

Zemin has a message for Bush, according to a report in the *Straits Times*. If Taiwan asserts its independence, China will respond aggressively. If America interferes with China's reaction, there will be catastrophic results. In return for allowing the Taiwanese democracy to flounder, China will not veto a Security Council use of force in Iraq. This blackmail can be distrusted at best. Even as America considers action against Saddam Hussein, the U.S. State Department released information indicating that Beijing sold complex fiber optic systems for Iraqi air defense.

Why does America need enemies when it has friends like China? America and President Bush should not reward dictators the ilk of Jiang Zemin with improved trade status, the lifting of sanctions, or barbecues in Crawford. America should return to the era of recognizing and defending democracy, not just those in power. Bush should concede nothing to Zemin.

Matthew Maddox is a junior management major.

'Trash' ads have no place in election

With only two weeks until elections, the mudslinging between Rick Perry and Tony Sanchez is as unrelenting as ever. It is long overdue that Texas voters grab both of these men by the ears and shout, "It's the issues, stupid!"



MARIANO CASTILLO

Going to the polls this year, most Texans can recall the negative accusations made by each candidate but have little grasp, if any, of where the candidates stand on issues.

Election debate on campus inevitably gravitates toward the trash ads. Too many students feel like educated voters simply because they can discuss the finer points of "we didn't elect him, we don't have to keep him" (Perry was indeed elected lieutenant governor) or "Sanchez lacks experience to govern" (his distinguished career and degrees in business administration and law certainly qualify him).

If Perry and Sanchez are obscuring their stances on education, health, taxes and other issues, the public has completely buried them by focusing on the polarizing issue of race.

Who has time to opine on school vouchers, immigration or budget plans when it is much easier to gripe about how Sanchez is "counting on" the Hispanic vote? Or how Perry is "pandering" to Hispanic voters, for instance, through his increased use of Spanish phrases?

While the candidates skirt the issues in favor of negative ads, many voters skirt the issues in favor of incorrect racial assumptions. Texas Democrat and Republican voters must remember to place emphasis on issues, not race. This election should set an important example on how to balance race and politics, as 29 percent of the potential electorate in Texas is Hispanic.

The first and most hurtful assumption is that voters are expected to vote along racial lines. This mindset unfairly creates antagonism toward minorities who sell out by voting for someone who is not of their race.

Not only is it detrimental to the minority community, but this misconception breeds resentment from many white voters who will not give minority candidates a look because of that stigma, in effect being racist.

If the issues are not the main focus, then race clouds people's perceptions and judgments. It creates dilemmas that have little to do with how these leaders will help the state. For Hispanics especially, these election decisions are particularly tough.

At a party a few weeks ago, I was taken aback when a young woman scolded me when I insinuated I was not planning to cast a vote for Tony Sanchez. "I can't believe that there are Hispanics

who are not supporting Tony," she exclaimed.

I was shocked. Of course I would not vote for Sanchez just because he is Hispanic, I replied. The same way I would not vote for Perry because he is an Aggie.

She admitted she was wrong for her initial remark, but asked which issues I sided on Perry with over Sanchez. She caught me. I had not familiarized myself with the issues — all I had was a hunch.

Beyond all of the mudslinging and race rhetoric, maybe Sanchez is indeed a candidate who would represent me better. I am embarrassed that I felt some guilt about supporting him because people may think I was just another Hispanic supporting the Hispanic candidate.

The candidates have not been giving voters the issues in their commercials. The public debate has consisted only of name-calling and racial assumptions. It is up to individual voters to not feel pressured by the hot air being blown by both parties and to do their research. There are several Web sites with breakdowns of major issues and where the candidates stand on water, budgets, education and health.

This campaign has been exceptionally dirty, and it is time voters take on their responsibilities and hose the mud off the candidates before Nov. 5.

Mariano Castillo is a senior journalism and international studies major.

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 200 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number. The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters also may be mailed to: 014 Reed McDonald, MS 1111, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Fax: (979) 845-2647. Email: mailcall@thebatt.com. Attachments are not accepted.



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