

## EDITORIAL

### GONE, NOT FORGOTTEN

#### Columbia crew embodied best humankind has to offer

The Battalion would like to express condolences to the families of the Space Shuttle Columbia crew. The crew members embodied the best values of humanity, and their sacrifice has not gone unnoticed. These astronauts are a prime example of the best America and humankind has to offer. The values of courage, hard work, competence, ambition and bravery were clear in the six Americans and the Israeli astronaut who died. Audrey McCool, mother of Space Shuttle Columbia pilot William McCool, told CNN that her son "did not die in vain. This will go on — (the) space program (will) go on."

Their line of work was risky, but the research and technology produced by the program is invaluable. Besides the practical aspects of the work done by the space program, research for research's sake is valuable. If humans lose the need to investigate and explore, then we will cease to be human. There is an aspect of our humanity enveloped in our desire to study the world around us.

After such a tragedy as the loss of the crew of the Space Shuttle Columbia, many people have begun to reexamine the need for the space program. If we look at the practical aspects of the program and the valuable research and technology it has brought forth, we find that even with the risks involved, the space program must continue. The lives of those seven astronauts were not lost in vain.

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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](mailto:mailcall@thebatt.com)

### MAIL CALL

#### 'Ghetto Party' was unforgivable

In response to the Jan. 22 editorial:

If Battalion editors cannot see or refuse to acknowledge the extent to which even planning "Ghetto Parties" damages Texas A&M's efforts to attract and retain minority faculty and students, we are in a sadder state than I thought.

Grant some of us the same First Amendment right to speak out and to disassociate ourselves from the hurtful, juvenile activities, however innocent, that The Battalion appears to defend.

In an article in The Eagle, I stated that campus racial incidents continue to misrepresent the great majority of Aggies to the world. As you know, Texas A&M is trying very hard to undo a perception, underscored by many blacks and Latinos in several recent surveys, that in spite of our good efforts and intentions, minorities still feel unwelcome at A&M.

Reported incidents suggest that some campus people here and there continue to mistreat or to say unattractive things to or about minorities. As the land-grant institution founded to educate the people of Texas, the injurious actions of a few young adults who insist on countering and thus belying the University's Mission Statement is not helping to improve our public image. True Aggies, we all know, take great pride in how we are perceived. That is why I said that, in the

wake of other widely-publicized racial incidents, perhaps the best way to stop this kind of inappropriate behavior would be to expel perpetrators (who should be aware of the University's diversity efforts by now) from the University. A zero-tolerance policy against unprovoked racial and ethnic assaults would effectively communicate the message to the four winds that such activities are not going to be tolerated.

Dr. Marco Portales  
Professor of English

#### Ogden speaks out

In response to a Jan. 15 article:

Wednesday's (Jan. 15) headline in The Battalion, "Senator Ogden criticizes Gates' diversity plans," by Rolando Garcia, certainly got my attention since I have never spoken to Mr. Garcia personally.

I have not yet had an opportunity to read Dr. Gates' plan and do not recall having criticized it.

I have discussed the issue of diversity with Dr. Gates in depth. He and I agree that Texas A&M University should be a more welcoming place for all to provide and receive an education.

It seems to me that, before writing an article about an important subject such as this and quoting me heavily throughout it, Mr. Garcia should have taken a few minutes to actually speak to me himself.

Stephen E. Ogden  
Senator R-District 5

# FALLING ON DEAF EARS

## Celebrities have no credentials for political discourse

There is a time and place for celebrities: on a stage or screen entertaining an audience. Entertainers they may be; educated in matters of foreign policy, many are not. As war becomes imminent, criticism from actors, musicians and comedians about President George W. Bush's initiative in Iraq has soared. As boisterous as this criticism may be, at its heart lies ignorance and misrepresentation. This much has been evident in recent weeks by three very prominent stars: Sheryl Crow at the American Music Awards, Janeane Garofalo in the Washington Post, and Sean Penn in, of all places, Baghdad.



MICHAEL WARD

ease of ignorance that ails Hollywood. Human Rights Watch reveals on its Web site that the real threat posed on the Iraqi people by an American invasion comes not from American soldiers, but from Saddam himself, who is not above using his own people as human shields on the streets of Baghdad.

The award, however, for the most audacious act goes to Sean Penn and his epic travels to Iraq. One will recall that several weeks ago, Penn decided that he needed to get the truth about the Iraqi people. Distrustful of the American media, he traveled, camera in hand, to Baghdad. "I needed to come here," he said, "to see a smile, to see a street." National news sources showed Penn snapping photographs of Iraqi citizens and visiting a children's hospital.

There is a vein of honor in obtaining the facts for one's own self as Penn sought to do. However, there is also a parallel vein of arrogance and stupidity in thinking that, because one is a celebrity, the Iraqi leaders would unveil their weapons, their murderous history, and the graves of thousands killed throughout the course of Saddam's regime. Was he blind to the fact that there are four pages of article headings found on the Human Rights Watch Web site that discuss the current Iraqi regime's horrific crimes against humanity? The only truth that Penn discovered on his trip was the fiction that the Iraqis wanted him to see. The only smiles that he saw were from children too young to understand the horrors that surround them.

Celebrities do one job well — they entertain their audiences — but their excursions into the realm of foreign policy are ill-fated. When Sheryl Crow claims, according to The Associated Press, that a war with Iraq would have "huge karmic retributions," one may be certain of this: the only "karmic retributions" that have occurred took place in Hollywood after the making of "Killer Klowns from Outer Space." One supposes karma thought that movie was as bad as everyone else did. Celebrities must realize their influence extends very little outside of Hollywood.

Michael Ward is a senior history major.

# Medical practices are unethical

Since the 1970s, a widely-accepted but highly controversial practice has existed in the emergency rooms of many hospitals across the United States. According to The Wall Street Journal, residents, or doctors-in-training, are allowed to practice emergency medical techniques on newly-deceased patients under the supervision of a senior physician. In addition, some hospitals also permit young doctors to practice these techniques on patients who are technically still alive, but beyond the help of even extraordinary measures, reports The Journal.



LAUREL FRANCK

There are many ethical issues that have the medical community divided on this topic. One is the fact that the patient's family or next-of-kin often has no knowledge that these procedures are being performed. Another issue is the fact that the hospitals will sometimes bill the nearly dead patients' insurance companies for the procedures performed for medical training, according to The Journal. A third issue arises from questions about respect for the dead and their religious beliefs.

Training on dead or dying patients is a vital and extremely beneficial practice for both physicians and their future patients, but it is also one to which some changes need to be made, especially with respect to obtaining the family's consent and the inappropriate charges for such procedures.

The techniques practiced include inserting needles into major veins, drawing body fluids and performing endotracheal intubation, a technique for opening a person's airway, reports The Journal.

According to Ethics In Emergency Medicine, a medical trade magazine, procedures can also include thoracotomies, opening the chest, and performing venous cutdowns, surgically opening veins to insert catheters.

Doctors and residents who support the practice say it is the best way to learn life-saving emergency procedures, according to abcnews.com. As Dr. Kenneth Iserson said in The Journal, "If the doctors in the emergency room units don't know how to do these procedures, these patients die."

Society places a heavy expectation on the emergency room clinician to act quickly, professionally, and expertly to save lives when possible, states Ethics In Emergency Medicine. Many times there is no adequate or affordable substitute, such as plastic models and preserved cadavers, for a live or recently dead human body for practicing and perfecting some of these skills.

While physicians need to be proficient in these life-saving techniques, a larger effort must be made to inform the patient's family and obtain their consent for these procedures, especially for the nearly dead. The training procedures on the nearly dead are currently listed in their medical records, but families are often unaware of that, according to The Journal. While the American Medical Association recently took the first step to resolve the issue by adopting a non-binding policy that no training is to be performed on dead patients without consent, it did not address the issue of nearly dead patients.

According to The Journal, the answer could be a simple consent form upon admission to a teaching hospital to perform these procedures. Drivers could also attach permission slips to their licenses, as with organ-donor cards, reports abcnews.com. Amednews.com suggests asking patients for their "blanket" permission upon entering a hospital.

Consent from patients or their family is extremely important and will also help make doctors aware of any religious beliefs the patient may possess.

The other issue that needs to be corrected is charging insurance companies for procedures performed on the nearly dead. According to Ethics In Emergency Medicine, nearly dead patients are sometimes not pronounced "dead" until trainees complete the procedures they are practicing, and this can be expensive for insurance companies and third-party payers, who must pay for all medical and surgical procedures done before the patient is officially pronounced dead.

Since health care costs are constantly on the rise and the health care and medical insurance systems have enough problems already, this is one practice that needs to end. Patients' families should not have to pay for procedures that likely had no impact on their loved one, and that "...fall into a gray area," as stated by Dr. Catherine Marco, chairwoman of the ethics committee of both the Society for Academic Emergency Medicine and the American College of Emergency Physicians.

Doctors need the hands-on experience and training that performing procedures on dead and dying patients offers. As Dr. Doug Smith, a third-year resident told The Journal, "We are doing this to help the next patient who comes through the door." However, until affordable alternatives can be developed, this practice must be done in the most ethical and respectful manner possible with regard to

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