

## Harsh and inhumane

Long Island hazing incident illustrates need for greater preventive measures

Members of a Long Island community are left puzzled after reports claiming several players of the Mepham High School football team allegedly sodomized three underclassmen with pine cones and broomsticks as part of a hazing ritual gone overboard at a preseason training camp in Pennsylvania; according to The New York Times. The situation apparently went unattended for days until one victim came forward in need of medical attention.



CHRIS LIVELY

Once again this incident brings to light an instance demonstrating what can happen when potentially dangerous situations are ignored. Hazing is a misunderstood part of human dignity, and, while society has partially declared war on it, it fails to even moderately rid it from America's high schools.

There is no common consensus in the public today on what constitutes hazing. Despite tougher laws and regulations it still occurs, often without the public's knowledge. In a recent study conducted by Nardine C. Hoover and Norman J. Pollard from Alfred University in New York, it was reported that 24 percent of high school students who joined sports teams were victims of some form of hazing. However, they found that the majority of these students did not classify what was done to them as hazing. Further, it was reported that anti-hazing laws do not affect the amount of hazing incidents that occur. This data not only shows that the general concept of hazing is misinterpreted and miscommunicated, but that there is essentially nothing being done to prevent it.

The Mepham football team example illustrates a common misconception. The methods used by the perpetrators were harsh and inhumane, but because it happened within organized boundaries people did not categorize them as criminal. Society has failed to clarify the distinction that just because a criminal act is committed in a hazing situation, it is still illegal or in this case, a felony.

Anyone who can fathom abusing any human the way the Long Island perpetrators did is obviously ruthless and demented. But this calls for a need to completely eliminate hazing. The modern-day merciless and immoral individuals society is producing, along with instances of hazing that go unnoticed,

makes for a disturbing and intolerable combination.

Upon conviction, the Long Island perpetrators should be punished to the full extent of the law. But why must it always take suffering and extreme examples for action to be taken? America is too content with the redundant notion of "you do the crime, you do the time." Justice is necessary but eradicating the root causes is more reasonable, and it does not take a genius to find them.

Blaming students who know about hazing and do not report it is a temporary solution that ignores the more real and undesirable issues at hand. High school is another world that exposes kids to feelings and situations unlike any other. High school students are consumed by the need to fit in and to be socially accepted in their rigorous and confusing journey to adulthood. The common notion of hazing amongst teenagers is that it is a normal and natural part of growing up and belonging. Further, if a child was to rat his classmate out and deviate from this norm, his world would be filled with nothing but devastating social and psychological

shame. These high school students cannot be blamed for playing the role society has cut out for them. In the bizarre Long Island case, however, kids were probably silent for fear of becoming the next victims.

Hazing is an integral part of tradition that has its roots deeply embedded in American culture. Despite the popular idea that hazing is a fun and traditionally harmless form of bonding, a time has come in America where it must be destroyed. Although it may be hard to eradicate, it must first be further stigmatized. Not only should the penalties be swift and severe, parents, teachers and coaches need to break through the invisible shield society has built that isolates them from the youth. Kids need to feel that it is acceptable to report incidents to adults and not feel awkward for discussing the issue with each other. More attention must be given to youth and public awareness. In addition, petitions must be required before any school event takes place. Society does not need to sit around and wait for the next big deplorable hazing incident to transpire and then run around in disarrayed chaos blaming each other. Adults should take initiative and at least attempt to prevent the acts before they happen rather than waiting around to point fingers.



TONY PIEDRA • THE BATTALION

Chris Lively is a senior sociology major.

## U.S. drug prices force Americans to cross the border

When a person goes to the pharmacy to pick up medication, whether it is antibiotics for an infection or blood pressure medication for the month, he or she does not expect to spend a week's salary on just a few pills.



LAUREN ESPOSITO

But this is rapidly changing. While most Americans can say their prescriptions are a medical necessity, the bill that comes along with the pills tends to make the consumer more ill.

Consumers are picking up their drugs now and wondering just how much they are going to have to shell out to obtain better quality health. To ensure that Americans have inexpensive access to quality prescription drugs, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration needs to follow the example set by Canada.

Last year a Canadian health agency reported that drug prices in the United States were 67 percent higher than the prices in Canada. That means that Americans are paying \$.67 on the dollar more for the same drugs than Canadians just a few miles north of the border.

"We pay more for prescription drugs than any other country in the industrialized world," said Joel Barkin, spokesman for Rep. Bernard Sanders, I-Vt. He is correct in his statement, and has led his trips to Canada to purchase prescription drugs.

One of the reasons drug prices in Canada are much lower than the drug prices in the United States is that in Canada, the price for drugs still under patent — meaning that they have no generic substitute — are regulated by a federal review board, according to the American Association of Retired Persons.

In the United States, there is no price regulation.

This is why the new "wonder drug" being advertised on television costs so much more than the "wonder drug" from last season, the one that now has three different generic brands behind it.

Canadian health insurers also base their drug prices and coverage on clinical evaluation of the effectiveness of the drugs. This leads to the identification of therapeutically similar drugs and the ability to negotiate with the different makers of the drugs for the best price to be offered to the consumer.

What Americans have resorted to is filling their prescriptions through a Canadian pharmacy to combat the high American prices received at the "convenient" drugstore around the corner.

The Canadian International Pharmacy

Association estimates that Internet-based Canadian pharmacy companies now serve about 1 million U.S. customers, up from the estimated 10,000 just four years ago.

The FDA has noticed this upward trend in illegal importation of drugs, and is begging for a major crackdown on the law breakers.

One of the FDA's major arguments in their crackdown of Canadian drug imports is that the imports are unregulated, and this deems them as a health hazard for Americans.

The FDA deems the safety of the drugs as its key issue. However, the Canadian and American drugs were most likely made in the same factory to begin with and shipped out at the same time, according to The Associated Press.

The FDA says that once the drugs leave the United States, they are no longer constrained to the strict safety procedures and guidelines that U.S. drugs must follow to make it to the hands of the consumer.

Although the FDA may have its consumers' best interest in mind, the Canadian health ministry went on record in May saying that it will officially be responsible for the safety and

quality of the prescription drugs that come out of Canada and go into the American consumer's hands.

In reference to Canadian drug safety, Rep. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio said, "There's never been one shred of evidence, in my committee or anywhere else, that the Canadian drug safety process is not as rigorous as ours."

The FDA is not focusing its wrath on the consumers, just on the suppliers. They have already ordered numerous companies to cease their operations, and threatened to file suit against them if they continued to supply Canadian drugs to the American consumer.

For now, there are still several companies in operation importing drugs to the United States for a fraction of the price the general public has to pay when receiving its medication at the local drugstore. If the FDA continues on the path it is traveling down, the remainder of the companies in operation will soon be shut down.

American consumers need to demand that the FDA start paying closer attention to how Canada operates its drug plans, and try to implement more of its procedures into U.S. pharmaceutical endeavors. Or, consumers may just need to invest in a good frequent flier program so they can buy their drugs elsewhere.

Lauren Esposito is a senior English major.

**"American consumers need to demand that the FDA start paying closer attention to how Canada operates its drug plans, and try to implement more of its procedures into U.S. pharmaceutical endeavors."**

### MAIL CALL

#### Diversity should not be University's priority

In response to Sarah Szuminiski's Sept. 29 article:

I noticed that the topic of diversity once again made the headlines of The Battalion. I wonder what this says about our campus' goal. The number one priority of an institution of higher education, such as Texas A&M University, is to offer the highest quality of education to those attending the establishment. However, in recent years the University has grown increasingly concerned with the students not enrolled.

I fear that the focus of the University is changing from offering the highest level of education to attracting the highest diversity percentage. I know that some will say that part of being the well-rounded student is experiencing the cultures of the world. I say make Texas A&M the greatest University and the cultures of the world will come to us.

Let's not change the standards of Texas A&M to attract those not who do not desire to come here; instead let us grow to be a better University by focusing on the students who love

this University and have dedicated their college years to Texas A&M.

Travis Holland  
Class of 2006

#### Unity Project a waste of money

In response to Melissa Sullivan's Sept. 29 article:

Unity Project is a waste of student's time and money. If you feel the need to donate money to something worthwhile, do not give your money to Unity Project. If you want to help burn victims, give money to the Shriner's Hospitals. Fires do not help burn victims. Save a life and not a fire, give blood to the Red Cross.

Instead of volunteering your time to build something that will burn for one night, volunteer with Habitat for Humanity and build a house that will last decades.

The Unity Project wastes money, time, and student leadership, sorely needed elsewhere — \$26,000 is a lot of money to be burning. Think of all the canned goods that could be donated with that money.

Further, if you absolutely feel the need to spend your time on saving Bonfire instead of something that will save lives or benefit the entire community, why not join Bonfire Coalition? At least they are working with the University, not against it, to bring Bonfire back to campus.

James Cleland  
Class of 2004

#### Environmentalism not all bad

In response to Mike Walters' Sept. 30 column:

Walters equates environmentalism with radical environmentalism and an anti-human philosophy. The majority of environmental groups are peaceful and work cooperatively with governments. Additionally, stating that all environmentalism is anti-human is similar to stating that all Muslims are terrorists. It's simply false.

Secondly, how can anyone seriously imply that industries make our water cleaner? Third world countries suffer from pollution due to insufficient regulation of industry and uneducated and

corrupt decisions by their governments and people. Writing that these countries have filthy water supplies due to lack of industry is explicitly implying that we have clean water thanks in no small part to industry. We have clean water because we can afford sanitation, not because Smith & Wesson and Colt have big gun plants.

Thirdly, how can someone possibly

blame public school teachers for the actions of these radical individuals? How can someone possibly write that being taught about water pollution in the second grade is inappropriate? Water pollution is inappropriate, not teaching about it.

Ryan Anderson  
Class of 2003



MIKE WALKER