

OPINION

THE BATTALION

Page 11 • Friday, December 5, 2003

EDITORIAL

A STEP FORWARD

But more needs to be done

This week, the Texas A&M administration finally broke the suspense that had been building for months after the Supreme Court's decision in *Grutter v. Bollinger* upheld affirmative action admissions for colleges. University President Robert M. Gates said A&M will not use race as a factor in admissions any more than it has since 1996, when the *Hopwood v. Texas* decision banned schools in the 5th Circuit from using race in admissions. Although the University's admissions policy will be based on a level playing field, it also plans to make a more determined effort to recruit minorities.

This is a commendable and necessary step in an area where A&M has failed in the past and still makes missteps. Even now, recruiting efforts aimed at minorities are largely abysmal.

There are two primary areas in which the University is lacking: minority recruitment and enrollment.

First, A&M does not expend enough effort in recruiting areas such as the Rio Grande Valley, which is predominantly populated by minorities. This is in part because there are few current students from the area to spur recruiting efforts.

However, recruiting applicants is only half the problem.

The larger problem is the fact that the University fails to keep track of why students who are accepted to A&M choose not to enroll. This is an especially pressing problem for minority students, who even after being accepted choose not to attend. The University should establish an admissions group to track why minorities who are accepted decide not to attend. This would allow the University to operate off more than hunches as to why so few minorities attend Texas A&M.

Gates' plan is a step toward making the University more appealing to minority students, but more needs to be done to ensure A&M reflects the make up of the state.

THE BATTALION

EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor in Chief	SOMMER HAMILTON	Metro Asst.	C.E. WALTERS
Managing Editor	ELIZABETH WEBB	Member	COLLINS EZEANYIM
Opinion Editor	JENELLE WILSON	Member	MATT RIGNEY
Metro Editor	SARAH SZUMINSKI	Member	DAVID SHOEMAKER

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@thebattalion.net

It's about time

Massachusetts gay marriage decision right step

On Nov. 18, the Massachusetts Supreme Court struck down in a 4-3 ruling the ban on gay marriages included in the state's constitution. The court gave the Massachusetts Legislature 180 days to come up with a solution that allows homosexuals to marry.



MATT RIGNEY

This groundbreaking ruling has set the stage for acceptance of gay marriages across the country, and gay couples in other states should challenge similar laws so that everyone across the country, regardless of sexual orientation, will enjoy the domestic rights that each American deserves.

The ruling takes the 1999 Vermont finding one step further, according to *The Washington Post*. The Vermont ruling gave gay couples protections and benefits that married couples enjoy; however, it did not recognize such unions with marriage licenses.

By outlawing the union of two people who genuinely love each other, lawmakers are effectively saying that homosexuals aren't the same as the average straight American and do not deserve the same treatment.

The court made clear that the question of morality played little part in its decision; it only addressed the validity of a ban on gay unions based on the Massachusetts constitution. However, the majority opinion did find, as Chief Justice Margaret H. Marshall wrote, that the constitution "affirms the dignity and equality of all individuals," and "it forbids the creation of second-class citizens."

This premise is not only true with regard to the Massachusetts constitution. The idea of having no second-class citizen is woven into the fabric of the nation. The conviction in the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal" should be upheld, as it is an innate tenet of democracy.

In America's past, this phrase only applied to white, land-owning citizens,

but as blacks and women got the vote and are finally beginning to be regarded as equals, it is obvious that the phrase has a literal truth.

Proponents of discrimination and closed-minded thinking argue that marriage is, as President George W. Bush put it, "a sacred institution between a man and a woman," and the court's decision "violates that important principle."

However, Marshall countered this argument in the court opinion, saying that same-sex marriages "will not diminish the validity or dignity of opposite-sex marriages."

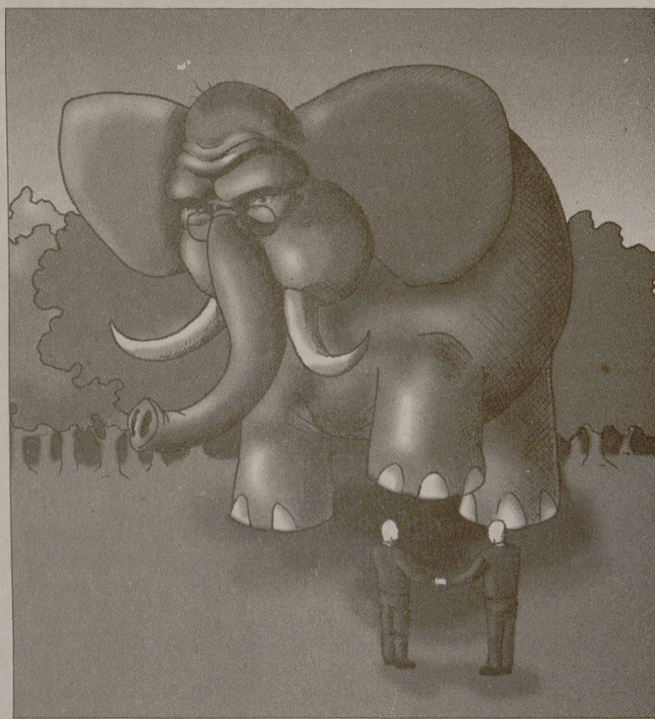
Arguing that they will, Marshall insists, is like arguing that a couple of a different race devalues the marriage of a couple of the same race.

Marriage strengthens society by having two people committed to each other as one in raising children and being active members of society.

Others who share Bush's views, such as Rep. Walter Jones, R-NC, called the ruling "one more assault on Judeo-Christian values."

This is completely untrue. An assault on Judeo-Christian values would be keeping the unalienable rights that every American deserves from certain people, thereby making them second-class citizens. Judging others by the color of their skin, their sex or their sexual orientation is against everything that the abiders of Judeo-Christian values uphold.

What these men and women do not see is that the powerful in society write history, whether it is morally right or not. In the past 250 years, the American powerful have been white, Christian men. It is these men who



TONY PIEDRA • THE BATTALION

kept slavery alive for nearly 100 years and kept blacks a segregated, second-class part of society for 100 years after that. It is these men who are keeping homosexuals in America second-class as well.

Keeping this precedent alive is morally wrong.

Only by challenging laws in the other 37 states that ban same-sex marriages will the gay population of America end the negative discrimination that the traditionally powerful have willed upon the nation. Lawsuits against these laws will open the eyes of the states' and nation's elite, making them realize that all men are created equal. It is time for these lawmakers to realize that Americans from all ethnic, sexual and economic backgrounds will not stand for any citizen of this country to be second-class.

Matt Rigney is a junior journalism major.

MAIL CALL

Students should look at diversity evidence

In response to a Nov. 26 mail call:

Mr. Apgar contends that there is no "real evidence" supporting the educational and social benefits of a diverse campus. Thus he alleges that proponents of diversity act on the basis of their intuitions and gut feelings. There is, in fact, a large body of research which demonstrates that diversity enriches the educational experience of all students.

This evidence was presented to the Supreme Court during the recent *University of Michigan* law school case, in which the court ruled that public higher education "has a compelling interest in attaining a diverse student body." Justice Sandra Day O'Connor wrote, "In addition to expert studies and reports entered into evidence at trial, numerous studies show that student body diversity promotes learning outcomes, and better prepares students for an increasingly diverse workforce and society, and better prepares them as professionals."

I encourage readers to review the evidence to which Justice O'Connor refers. Simply go to the Web site <http://www.aera.net/reports/> and you will find a volume by the American Educational Research Association that brings together the wealth of tangible, empirical evidence on the benefits that diversity brings to the individual student, the institution, and the broader society.

Larry Oliver
Department of English
Associate Dean for Liberal Arts

New admissions plan a good idea

In response to a Dec. 4 article:

President Gates did an outstanding job in outlining how to achieve "diversity" here at Texas A&M in his statement on Dec. 3.

The use of quotas and affirmative action in the college admittance process is wrong, but this is not what President Gates outlined. Instead, his

plan is a fair and balanced way to achieve diversity at Texas A&M at no expense to those who qualify in their own right to be here through individual merit, academically and otherwise. In addition, the plan also calls for the strengthening of the required standardized test scores for automatic academic admission so to open up "roughly another 850 places in the freshman class where applicants can be evaluated on the basis of the whole person."

Further, the University plans to push for more minorities to apply for admission. The vice president of diversity, Dr. James Anderson, helps most here because when more qualified minorities apply, the larger pool of qualified applicants results, creating a healthier, more diverse community of learning.

All Aggies, including the Young Conservatives of Texas, should be informed before doing something such as an 'affirmative action' bake sale when the University is not looking for 'reverse discrimination' but for a fair chance for all who are qualified by individual merits of "academic achievement, extracurricular activities, unusual experiences, leadership potential, and special talents."

John Book
Class of 2007

Plan an example of reverse discrimination

Since discrimination seems to be the issue as of late I feel it is very necessary to address the president's recent letter to the student body. I would beg to know exactly why "where we are is unacceptable" and why Dr. Gates feels that "the future of Texas A&M depends on being more successful in attracting more minority students to join the Aggie family." I am in no way against diversity, however instituting a quota of minority students that enroll is unacceptable.

Targeting any "group" based on race or ethnicity is discrimination against the non-targeted group. In this case, minorities will be targeted while Caucasians are being discriminated against. This is exactly what reverse discrimination is about.

Being an engineering major I see it even more. You have engineering societies for every race, gender or

ethnicity except for white males. The point is that since every group except Caucasians are targeted by this University (and society as a whole) that white males are being discriminated against in a very discrete, very calculated manner. It is ridiculous and I hope that someday race and ethnicity will become less of an issue than it is to this administration.

Stephen Partain
Class of 2004

A train has to sound its horn at crossings

In response to a Dec. 4 mail call:

Mr. Archer and Ms. Gilliam have pointed fingers without asking questions first. I have as much respect for Silver Taps as the next Ag. However, before you start pointing fingers for the obvious interruption of this month's Silver Taps, consider this: First, did you stop to think why a train sounds its horn? Trains give successive blasts of their horns upon entering highly populated areas. This is to alert motorists and pedestrians who may be on the track or at crossings.

Secondly, did it occur to you that maybe Union Pacific Railroad has no choice in the matter? Many state and federal regulations require trains to "sound off" in order to warn those near the track. It would be nice to think that an Student Government Association organization at A&M has the power to go above the law and make such a request a reality. But when it comes down to it, sadly Traditions Council has no such power. Next time, don't get caught up in the ceremony, get caught up in the meaning. We were all there to say goodbye to a member of our Aggie family.

Ian Pearce
Class of 2006

The world cannot stop for Silver Taps

I was appalled at the letter complaining about the train during Silver Taps. Archer and Gilliam said, "Why can't Traditions Council contact UPRR and work something out with them?" What

this really says is, "Why can't the rest of the world stop because Texas A&M has something going on?" This kind of arrogance makes our school look ethnocentric and weak. If anything, the train during Silver Taps can be seen as a reminder of the roots of College Station and Texas A&M. Without that train, this town wouldn't exist, and neither would this University. So get over it, and stop expecting the world to revolve around us.

Kelli Davis
Class of 2006

McNeal should not be criticized for sign

In response to a Dec. 4 mail call:

I am also not a fan of the "horns down" sign, but that's where my agreement with Mr. Rasch's letter stops.

It was a very long season that brought the worst record in most of our lifetimes. However, our poor record is no reason to ask our players to not celebrate gametime achievements, or more importantly, to ask them to turn off the emotional juices of competition and a rivalry game. I would be much more concerned about our future if Reggie had just tossed the ball to the official and walked away, or worse yet, had he not made it to the endzone at all.

Anyone can lead a team when the chips are high, but it takes a special person to not give up and continue to

lead when the chips are down. I'm sure no one on our team was satisfied with our season, and I applaud Reggie for not turning that emotional fire off in the face of a tough season.

Lanny Hayes
Class of 2003

Horns down sign just like Aggie T-shirts

While I appreciate your attempts to remind everyone of the class that we Aggies pride ourselves on, I think calling our players "pathetic" is a far worse act than Mr. McNeal's horns down act. I don't see how what he did is any different from the "Saw 'em off" and dehorned images of the University of Texas logo that we Aggies display proudly every day.

Perhaps it was your feelings about this season that have inspired you to write such a letter. No one can deny this hasn't been our best season, but keep in mind this is Coach Fran's first year, and we did have a very tough schedule. You can't expect miracles.

In the meantime, until you slave away in the hot Texas sun all summer long for football practice and then step onto that field and score us some points against one of the top-ranked teams in the nation, please keep your judgements about "pathetic performance" and "dignity" to yourself.

Stacy Reeves
Class of 2006

