

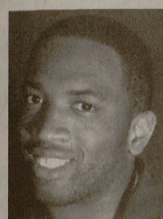
OPINION

THE BATTALION

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Slave for you

Computer terms master and slave are just names and do not allude to racism



COLLINS EZEANYIM

According to Los Angeles County officials, certain terms associated with the personal computer are not politically correct. In other words, PCs may no longer be "PC."

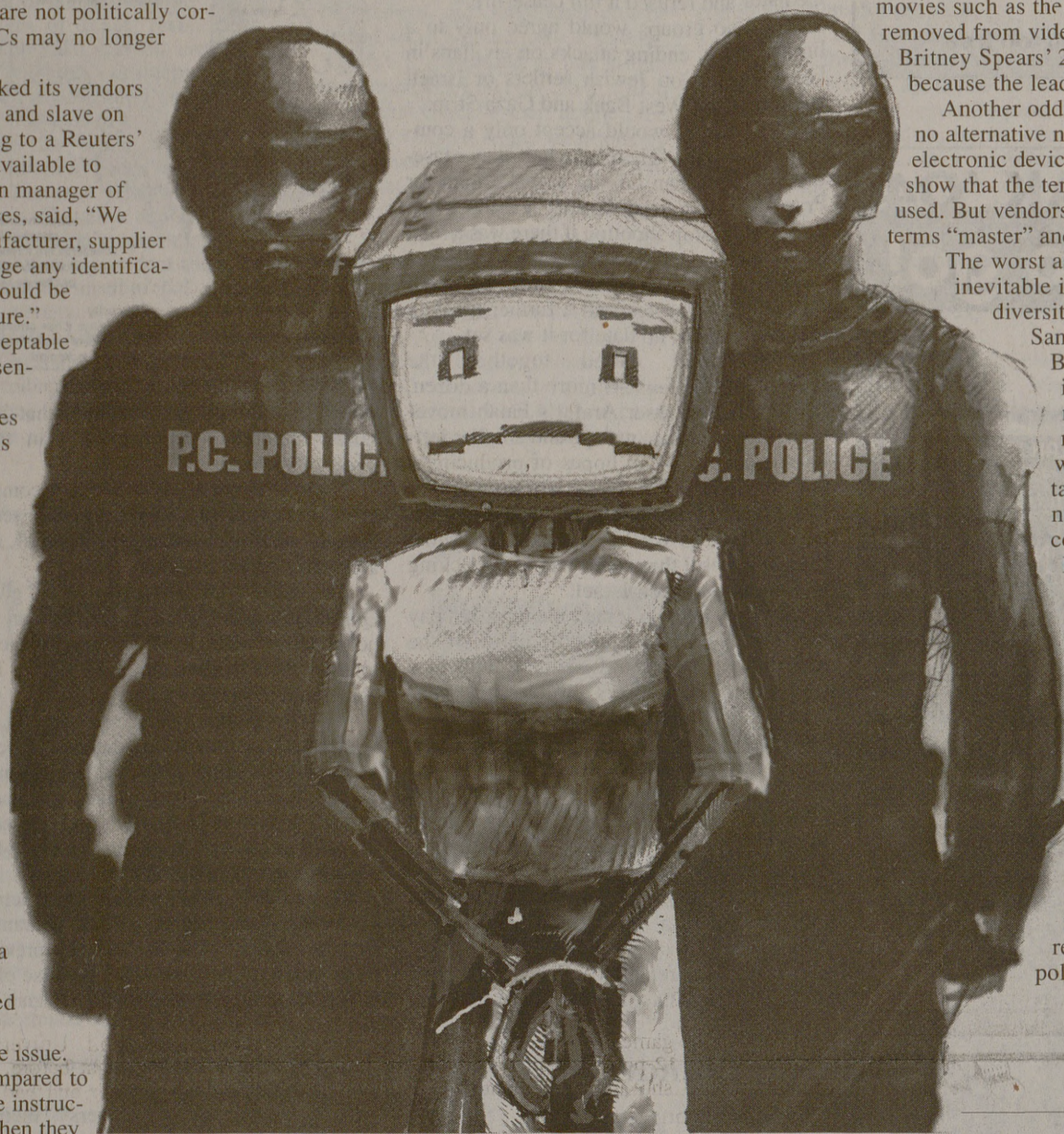
Los Angeles County has asked its vendors to stop using the terms master and slave on computer equipment, according to a Reuters' news story. In a memo made available to Reuters, Joe Sandoval, division manager of purchasing and contract services, said, "We would request that each manufacturer, supplier and contractor review, identify and remove/change any identification or labeling of equipment components that could be interpreted as discriminatory or offensive in nature." Sandoval claimed master and slave were not acceptable identification due to the "cultural diversity and sensitivity of Los Angeles County."

Although this recommendation by Los Angeles County is an attempt at "cultural sensitivity," this is a ridiculous decision that may harm the pro-diversity movement because this frivolous claim could undermine a serious cause.

Not surprisingly, the news of this request was ridiculed by talk radio show hosts such as Neal Boortz and Rush Limbaugh. But most people would agree that the move by Los Angeles officials is worthy of such derision. According to webopedia.com, an online dictionary of computer terms, a slave is a device that is controlled by another device. For example, a printer is a slave device to a computer. And in machines with two disk drives, the master will be the primary drive and the slave is the secondary drive. It is logical to use the master and slave terms in such an arrangement. Being offended by the words used in this context is laughable.

These words have been used with electronic devices for years without incident. But the request by Los Angeles County was spurred by a complaint made to the Office of Affirmative Action Compliance by a worker who encountered the terms on video equipment.

Of course, for blacks, slavery can be a sensitive issue. But the point is that slavery shouldn't even be compared to these terms, which refer to electronic devices. The instructions for a new CD-burner have no racist intent when they instruct the user to install the device as the master.



PAUL WILSON • THE BATTALION

If one uses the logic of Los Angeles County officials, movies such as the Oscar-winning "Glory" should be removed from video stores because it depicts slavery. Britney Spears' 2001 album "Britney" should be banned because the lead song is titled, "I'm a Slave For U."

Another oddity about Sandoval's memo is that it gives no alternative naming conventions for master and slave electronic devices. It was pointed out on the Neal Boortz show that the terms "primary" and "secondary" could be used. But vendors should not be forced to abandon the terms "master" and "slave" if they do not want to.

The worst aspect of this recommendation is its inevitable impact on those who are pushing for diversity in important areas of society.

Sandoval's reasoning is especially damaging. By claiming this decision was made in the interest of diversity, Sandoval will only manage to galvanize those who oppose measures, such as affirmative action, that will bring much needed diversity to important areas of society. These opponents can now claim that diversity measures are only concerned about subscribing to a politically-correct mentality that favors one's radical notion of cultural sensitivity at the expense of common sense.

Frankly, the notion that minorities, blacks in particular, should be protected from these benign terms is more insulting than the words themselves could ever be. Upon receiving the complaint from the aforementioned worker, the OAC should have calmly explained that master and slave were not and could not be offensive. They apply to inanimate machine parts, not humans.

Los Angeles County officials will never be able to master the diversity realm if they find themselves slaves to political correctness.

Collins Ezeanyim is a senior computer engineering major.

Accepting consequences

White House should show dead soldiers' coffins

On July 2, President George W. Bush attempted to send a strong signal of U.S. resolve toward Iraqi insurgents.

"There are some who feel like the conditions are such that they can attack us there. My answer is, bring 'em on," he said. Apparently the terrorists took Bush's words to heart, resulting in the deaths of more than 440 U.S. troops since the war started nearly nine months ago. Yet a new controversy is brewing over the Bush administration's war policy involving media coverage of war casualties returning from Iraq.

According to The New Republic, "the Pentagon has continued its ban on media coverage of the return of flag-draped coffins to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, denying the dead soldiers and their loved ones even that simple public recognition of sacrifice." Recent questions have been raised about whether this policy is the most appropriate thing to do during a time of war. Nonetheless, the Pentagon and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld continue to insist upon preventing the American public from seeing the true cost of war.

Public support for a war with Iraq was rather high prior to the invasion last March. Bush had convinced most Americans that the United States needed to take out Saddam Hussein to protect the country from his weapons of mass destruction. Despite the objections of millions of people in the United States, many Americans did not believe that the war would turn into the occupation quagmire that now exists. This is where the truth must be shown.

For a variety of reasons, the occupation of Iraq is not turning out as well as expected. Soldiers are dying nearly every day. In addition to more than 500 coalition deaths, many soldiers are experiencing disabling effects resulting in amputations, shell shock and post-traumatic stress disorder. Even the Department of Defense predicts that between 12 and 18 soldiers have committed suicide in Iraq. The American people cannot ignore and the Bush administration cannot deny the media from covering the harsh realities of war.



JONATHAN STEED

Americans who supported the war must buck up and see firsthand what is really happening in Iraq. If they can send America's sons and daughters into harm's way then they must experience the sadness of a flag-draped coffin returning to the United States. Rumsfeld and other war hawks should not deny coverage of these coffins to the American public. Many see television coverage of coffins as recognition of the sacrifice soldiers made for their country. Others view it as necessary to illustrate to the public that war is no laughing matter — it is a matter of life and death. Either way, the Pentagon is making a huge mistake by preventing various media outlets from covering the return of dead soldiers.

Or are they? After all, election season will be approaching soon and the American public will start paying more attention to current events. As people switch through different channels looking for their favorite shows, or perhaps avoiding another annoying campaign commercial, they might pass by footage of two, three or four coffins returning from Iraq.

"Americans who supported the war must buck up and see firsthand what is really happening in Iraq."

These coffins contain soldiers who gave the ultimate sacrifice in service for their country. More than likely, such haunting scenes can't bode well for an incumbent president up for re-election with a mess in Iraq on his hands. It is thus no surprise that such footage is forbidden by Rumsfeld and others.

Whether an individual supported the decision to go to war with Iraq, each citizen must be willing to accept the results of war. For many people, especially those of the younger generations who have not had to experience the sacrifices made by those in World War II, Korea and Vietnam, war involves U.S. armed forces dropping a couple of bombs on a military target in Afghanistan. To them, war does not involve the bodies of their generation, or maybe even people they know, coming home in coffin. However, this is exactly what war is. Americans cannot deny its existence or its consequences. Thus, the Pentagon should reverse its policy immediately and allow the media to show footage of coffins returning home from Iraq. But with another election year quickly approaching, don't expect any immediate change of policy by the Bush Administration.

Jonathan Steed is a senior political science major.

MAIL CALL

President's plan makes diversity

In response to Eric Ambroso's Dec. 4 story:

Dr. Gates has once again made a brilliant move by deciding that race will not be a factor in admission to Texas A&M. If we can only get more of those in the minority groups admitted to A&M to join us, as Dr. Gates suggests, we will achieve the goal of enhancing diversity without resorting to the controversies of race. This will require that we work harder at making the campus more vibrant and attractive to all members of society. This is achievable. We will serve our institution better by moving Aggieland closer to the mainstream America, a move that will also help us achieve the goals of Vision 2020.

Ramesh Talreja
Dept. of Aerospace
Engineering

Scholarship process is unfair

As students applaud Dr. Gates for his new admission policy, I wish them all to look further into the Aggie Miracle Project that is an addendum to the admissions policy.

Who is going to pay for these scholarships? The answer of course is the students of Texas A&M. We will be paying for students who qualify for the illogical scholarship rules. Should a student whose single parent household makes less than \$40,000 per year suffer because his mother or father got a college degree? Should a family who makes \$50,000 a year and have three kids all going to school at the same time not qualify for this scholarship? The way it is written, none of these students deserve this scholarship, but they each have to pay for it. Gates said that 575 stu-

dents would have gotten this scholarship this year if it were available. If over four years 575 students take this scholarship, \$11.5 million will be coming out of student's pocket. The administration may say that it is not, but any money that is being used for this initiative is money that is not being used for something else.

Richard Branch
Class of 2006

Gates' plan is fair, representative

The Student Senate applauds Dr. Gates for his creation of a Tuition Advisory Council. The committee composition is fair and broadly representative of the many voices that make up our University community. Actions such as this demonstrate a good-faith effort to involve students in the decision-making process.

Matthew Wilkins
Speaker of the Student
Senate

Gay marriages overstep freedom

In response to Matt Rigney's Dec. 5 column:

Based on the freedom and equality that one deserves in a democracy, Mr. Rigney argued in his article that it's

about time for all gay population to challenge laws in America that prevent gay marriage. I think a fundamental question to ask is why a person chooses to be a gay? May be one is too bored enjoying it with opposite sex or one wants to try something different or that kind of sexual orientation is in one's genes? Well, how about people who like to have sex with animals although the percentage of these as compared to people with gay tendencies could be very less? But one can argue that the percentage of people with gay tendencies is also very less as compared to average straight people. So, why not to make marriage of humans with animals also legal? That will also augment freedom and equality that one deserves. Excess of everything is bad. So is the excess of freedom!

Deepak Goyal
Class of 2006

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MIKE LUCKOVICH