

AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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Fighting the good fight

Whatever the cause, students voice their concerns and views by way of protests

By Jose Cruz
THE BATTALION

When Nick Anthis, a junior biochemistry major and president of the Aggie Democrats, went to Spain for spring break, he said he had no idea he would experience one of the greatest moments in his life.

"I was in Spain for spring break, right around the time the war in Iraq was starting and I took part in a march for peace protest on the streets of Madrid," Anthis said. "It was great to take part in that event and witness such a show of unity."

While many students consider protests to be a particularly effective form of political activism, others have different opinions. Many overlook protesters completely and condemn them as extremists. Whatever the case may be, students such as Anthis are politically conscious and feel they must act on certain issues.

"Great injustices drive us out and activism will hopefully be able to make a difference," he said. "I mainly have participated in low key protesting, mainly to bring awareness to the public and officials in charge."

There are a variety of ways people can protest, but he has found simple things such as holding signs, yelling chants and marching to be most effective.

"Being physical and loud is important so that people take notice," he said. "Big numbers also help out."

Anthis said he has tried other means to express his opinion, but said that he thinks protesting is ultimately necessary in certain cases.

"Some other ways I have tried to raise awareness are voting and campaigning for people who share similar ideals, but sometimes certain issues are too urgent to wait," he said. "You want to hopefully make a change in society, but sometimes voting isn't enough. Sometimes we need more awareness than ordinary means provide."

David Dunton, a junior environmental science major and president of Aggies for Life, said he thinks it's important that people be respectful when protesting.

"Make sure you trust the organization to stay within the law so that your credibility and the credibility of the club aren't ruined," he said.

Dunton said he thinks the point is to try to draw attention to an objectionable act and to get people to understand his point of view.

"We are trying to get people to ask questions and increase awareness," he said. "Ultimately we are trying to change the way people think about abortion and eradicate it."

Dunton said some people think of political activists as violent

and radical fanatics who will go to any means to achieve their goal. According to Dunton, this is not the case.

"We don't take part in aggressive tactics; our goal is to make a point," Dunton said. "I haven't been in any trouble while protesting. We try to stay inside the boundaries of the law."

Dunton said he has found that peaceful protests are more effective than violent or obnoxious protests.

"When you talk to someone on a personal level and engage in an intellectual debate you accomplish much more," he said. "Treating someone with equality is the key; you always have to honor the other person's viewpoints."

But protesting is more than just standing up for one's beliefs. Students such as Anthis and Dunton said they will continue to protest in the future because they like being able to talk to people about what they believe is right. Similarly, Jared Copeland, a senior political science major and anti-war activist, said he thinks protesting is about opening up a dialogue for people to share ideas.

"Some people might call us extremist but at the same time it creates a dialogue," he said. "I would encourage other people to protest. It's a vital part of our democracy and development of ideas."

Copeland said protesting shows people a unified stance on a subject.

"Some people might be scared that no one else thinks like they do," he said. "So if they see other people that feel the same way about an issue then it will give them confidence."

Copeland said he has experienced an ideal environment for protesting while at A&M.

"A&M is good about allowing students to protest on campus," he said. "They are just allowing freedom of speech. College stu-



J.P. BEATO III • THE BATTALION

Mallory Bond, a freshman general studies major, and Jackie Vasquez, a freshman bioenvironmental science major, attend a pro-war rally held at the Sul Ross statue in front of the Academic Building last March. Bond and Vasquez were there to support Bush and to pray for the safety of the troops and the children of Iraq.

dents are developing their ideas. They have the energy and passion for their beliefs. When you get older and get a job it's harder to protest because there is less opportunity. Priorities shift when you get older."

Kristin Wilbourne, a senior American studies major, said she took part in various anti-war protests during the past year. She said she thinks people should be careful when protesting.

"Just be careful of the rules because you are putting yourself out there so make sure you really believe in the cause," he said.

From her experiences, protests have mainly been a gathering of ideas presented to the rest of the campus.

"We welcomed anyone willing to come and talk to us," Wilbourne said. "We had many people come up to us and ask us questions so I think we were effective in getting some people to think. Our country is founded on people questioning the people in charge."

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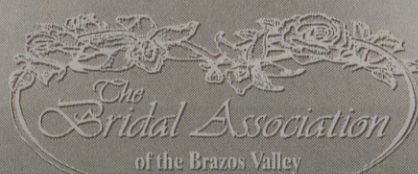
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