

A civil rights movement for our time

Young Americans should fight intolerance and support gay rights movement

I was flipping through Life Magazine's "Our Century in Pictures" the other day, admiring photographs depicting the United States' steady and sometimes frustrating progress and achievements. One image in particular grabbed my attention. The photograph displayed a young black woman breaking segregation rules by sitting at the counter in a small Southern diner. In response to her quiet protest, several whites have surrounded her and are pouring sugar on her head, doing their best to degrade her. Sitting on both sides of the woman are two white youths, whose support earns them equal treatment from the antagonizing strangers. In a place and time in which racism was the status quo, three young people sat in silent protest against the rules and attitude of intolerance that had been accepted for generations.

Today, we live in a place and time in which some forms of intolerance are not only accepted, but perpetuated by the president. The hot topic of the past week has been President George W. Bush's proposed Constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage. Looking at the photo's display of fortitude in the midst of hate, I realize that once again America's youth must show this country that it has not reached true equality, and that denying fundamental rights to individuals due to certain immutable characteristics is un-American.

This issue has lacked the necessary outcry from the usual proponents of equality. Although the amendment was proposed to create a wedge in the Democratic Party, it hasn't done so because many Democrats have failed to stand up for what they know is right. The party, through the voice of its prospective presidential candidate John Kerry, has managed to avoid a clear stance on the issue by taking an aberrant middle road against the amendment but also against gay marriage. Even when discrimination hits close to home and homophobia becomes tangible, too many have remained silent. Last month a fellow Aggie was physically attacked for being gay. The Aggie family has



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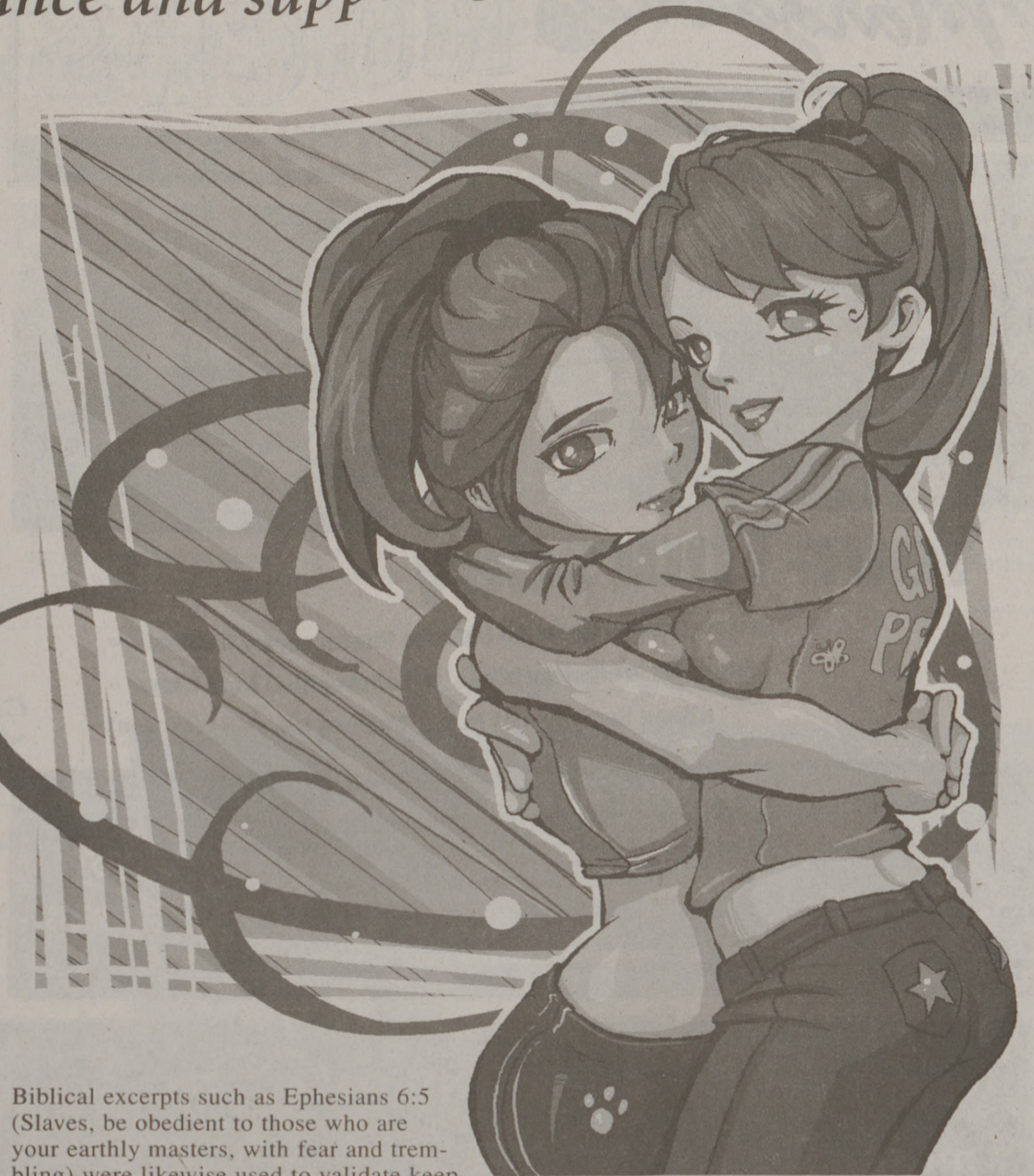
been close-lipped and reluctant to lend support to a brother.

What is stopping young Americans from pursuing the ideals of equality that their minds, free from the constraints of age-related pessimism, should foster? Perhaps it is the fact that homosexuals make up a small percentage of the population. Figures vary, but the general consensus is that roughly 10 percent of the population is gay or lesbian. It is likely that many opponents to same-sex marriage have never had a personal relationship with a gay person, and thus are ignorant of the reality that the gay and lesbian population experiences love, pain and the full spectrum of emotions that comes with being human. Shortly after the U.S. Supreme Court decided *Bowers v. Hardwick*, a 1986 case which upheld a sodomy law similar to the one struck down last summer in *Lawrence v. Texas*, Justice Lewis Powell said he had never known a homosexual person. He was the swing vote for the majority. Ignorance can be a powerful thing.

Justice Powell's lack of empathy allowed a majority opinion that Indiana University law professor Lynne Henderson calls a manifested form of "prejudice, stereotype, blind categorization and denial of the humanity of a group of people." Yet many people today continue to verbally attack a group of people they know nothing about.

Many people use religion to justify their opposition to same-sex marriage. Religion has also been used to promote racism and sexism in the United States. Literal interpretation of the Scripture, such as Ephesians 5:22-24 (Wives, be submissive to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church ... As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands) at one time overflowed into the legal system. In the 1873 case of *Bradwell v. Illinois*, Justice Joseph Bradley said "the paramount destiny and mission of women is to fulfill the noble and benign offices of wife and mother. This is the law of the Creator."

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Biblical excerpts such as Ephesians 6:5 (Slaves, be obedient to those who are your earthly masters, with fear and trembling) were likewise used to validate keeping African Americans in chains. The word of God should never be used to discriminate against a class of people, especially considering that the Bible as a whole teaches love and compassion for one's fellow man.

How long will America allow intolerance to remain in its laws? To many, it is inconceivable that an amendment singling out a specific class of persons and blatantly denying their rights could be written alongside the amendments

which guarantee the rights that make America the nation that it is. Concerning the rights of gays and lesbians, we have not been loud enough. Who in the 90 percent will stand for the 10? Let us young Americans lead the way.

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MAIL CALL

Equality of the sexes applies to bus etiquette

In response to a March 3 mail call:

Equal treatment of men and women is one of the ultimate aims of our society, and the fatuous comments by Ms. Doan do nothing to promote this equality. Respect over and above that common courtesy which is extended to all members of society is to be earned on merit, not preferred based solely upon gender.

I suggest that if Ms. Doan gets on a bus in the future that is full of men sitting, then she should do what any other normal individual would do in a similar situation: stand up, suck it up and take the first seat that becomes available.

Disabled? Old? Ill? I will happily move for somebody who suffers physical difficulties due to health or age, but gender alone does not fit this category and nor should it qualify somebody for extra respect.

You want more respect from me than I would give to another man? Earn it or live with it, it is called equality.

*Daren Swanick
Class of 2007*

Nader didn't cause Gore to lose 2000 election

In response to Collins Ezeanyim's March 3 column:

In the Marine Corps, we would refer to this as "no impact, no idea." I am of course referring to the fact that Mr. Ezeanyim has missed the mark with his latest attack of our commander in chief. His story was cloaked in some misguided rhetoric about Ralph Nader's influence on the elections in 2000 and the upcoming one in November. However, he just couldn't resist throwing a few shots at Bush.

Here's the bottom line: Ralph Nader did not cause Al Gore to lose the election in 2000. Al Gore caused Al Gore to lose the election in 2000. Al Gore won his own home state of Tennessee (where he served as senator), he would have won the race. However, the good people of Tennessee, the constituency who probably knew him best, agreed with the majority of Americans in that they believed George W. Bush should be president.

I do have to give Mr. Ezeanyim credit however,

for being consistent with the typical liberal attacks and blame games we are seeing everyday. Especially from the likes of John Kerry, who has spent \$6.9 million on TV ads with 74 percent of them directly attacking the president.

It is understandable that Kerry doesn't want to talk about himself and his record. With a voting record like his, I wouldn't either. From a service member's point of view, how in the world are we supposed to react to facts such as him saying "I'd like to see our troops dispersed through the world only at the directive of the United Nations" and him voting against 27 major weapons systems we currently use? With or without Ralph Nader, come November, the choice for me is crystal clear.

*Andy Thaxton
Class of 2006*

Outsourcing is what's best for consumers

In response to Jon Steed's March 4 column:

Jobs do not belong to the employees who fill them. The jobs belong to the employer. Therefore, they cannot be "lost," as Mr. Steed says, because the employer knows right where they go: to people who can do the same work for less money.

Jobs are just another item to be traded in a free market. With government interference, the market forces are upset by artificial controls, and costs invariably go up. As long as outsourcing continues, the winner will continue to be the consumer. The employees who "lost" their jobs had better develop some marketable skills. Take note, Mr. Steed, this whole outsourcing buzz is just another factor in economics. Those who can do the best job for the least amount of money get rewarded, just as with any other product we buy in stores.

*Paul Sims
Class of 2006*

Clarification

Two sentences were combined in a Forum column in Thursday's Battalion by Graduate Student Council President Josh Peschel. The column should read as follows: "Traditional social conservatism adamantly opposes government intervention. On the topic of same-sex marriage a common sentiment is for the government to restrict same-sex marriage."

Bush shouldn't support costly highway bill

A government committed to a war far from home, while

simultaneously allocating funds to new and expensive domestic programs, will inevitably run an increasing deficit. This is what President George W. Bush is leading the country toward in the run up to the November elections if things keep going the way they have been. With the massive expenditures necessary to sustain troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, Bush cannot let Congress pass so many new programs, especially pork projects such as those inherent in the new, massive highway bill before Congress.

The highway bill slowly making its way through Congress is a perfect target for Bush to show that he cares about stopping out-of-control spending. According to *The Washington Post*, the bill passed the Senate with a total cost of \$318 billion, and "it differs from a costlier bill pending in the House." The spending in the bill cannot be covered solely by the highway trust fund, according to the article, meaning that the difference must be made from funds that could go toward other purposes.

According to the article, the House bill will likely total \$370 billion. The president requested a bill that would have cost \$256 billion, a number more in line with the revenues from the federal gas tax, which pays for the highway fund. This would not force an increase in the gas tax, as noted

by Sen. Don Young, R-Alaska. Revenue would have to be diverted from other projects that would be necessary in order to pay for the huge bill.

The highway bill will allow congressmen in an election year to present accomplishments to their constituents. A column by Bob Novak of the *Chicago Sun-Times* rattled off a few such cases: Sen. Lisa Murkowski got \$30 million in the bill to build roads in remote parts of Alaska; Sen. Pat Murray got more money for ferries serving Puget Sound; and Sen. Harry Reid, the Democratic whip in the Senate, got a provision repealing a gaming tax thrown in.

Bush should not go through the motions of being opposed to the project for show. He needs to bring the government's annual budget back in to balance, or at least as close to being balanced as possible. He also needs to resist the characteristically Democratic desire to raise taxes. The only way to do this is to keep a close eye on spending, which the government should be doing anyways.

However, it looks as if the White House, with the ever-present advice of Karl Rove, may be simply using the issue as a political foil. In a recent column, Novak mentioned that even if Bush vetoed the bill, as he has threatened to do, it would still likely be passed on the two-thirds override. This would allow the president to look tough on spending restraint, but let Congress get their serving of pork. As Novak says, "that may be too clever by half for Americans."

Bush should just stick to his guns on the issue and not just for show. If Bush wants to make sure his domestic initiatives — such as



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