

## Conservatism run amok

### YCT must reconsider its hard-line partisan approach to racial, political issues

It's sad when an organization with the potential to influence and improve daily life on a college campus renders its good intentions useless, isolating itself from the vast majority of the student body. This may happen to the Young Conservatives of Texas — both here at Texas A&M and at the University of Texas — unless some changes are made.

At its core, the YCT advocates many ideological policies that this author, a libertarian, agrees with. Nevertheless, the crude fashion in which this group has strived to marshal student awareness regarding controversial issues has cast it under a dark cloud of bigotry for all onlookers to see.

Recently, members of the YCT chapter at that other school in Austin raised a ruckus over a proposal, initiated by University President Larry Faulkner, requiring students to spend one semester studying a different culture.

What's the big deal here? Is it possible that the university wants students to actually learn something multicultural? The nerve of those crazy liberal professors who dominate academia!

The Director of Internal Affairs for the YCT at UT, Mark Tait, proclaimed that this multicultural program is "political correctness gone amok." Tait further declared, "Students don't need bureaucracy to tell them to increase and broaden their cultural perspectives."

OK, fair enough. Mr. Tait has a point — a weak one — but nonetheless a noteworthy argument.

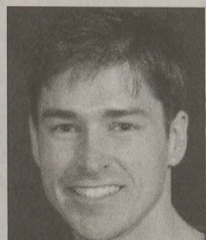
Perhaps most students don't need a constant reminder that increasing one's awareness and understanding of other cultures is important. However, it is foolish to believe that students, not required by an academic curriculum, will leisurely engage in studies of foreign cultures simply because they know it's beneficial. It's just not going to happen. Even if it did, universities still should not receive this degree of student opposition to proposals such as this one. After all, has no one heard of the term "Globalization?"

By itself, this event doesn't blemish the YCT's reputation here on A&M's campus. In fact, this chapter in Austin has virtually no impact on A&M whatsoever.

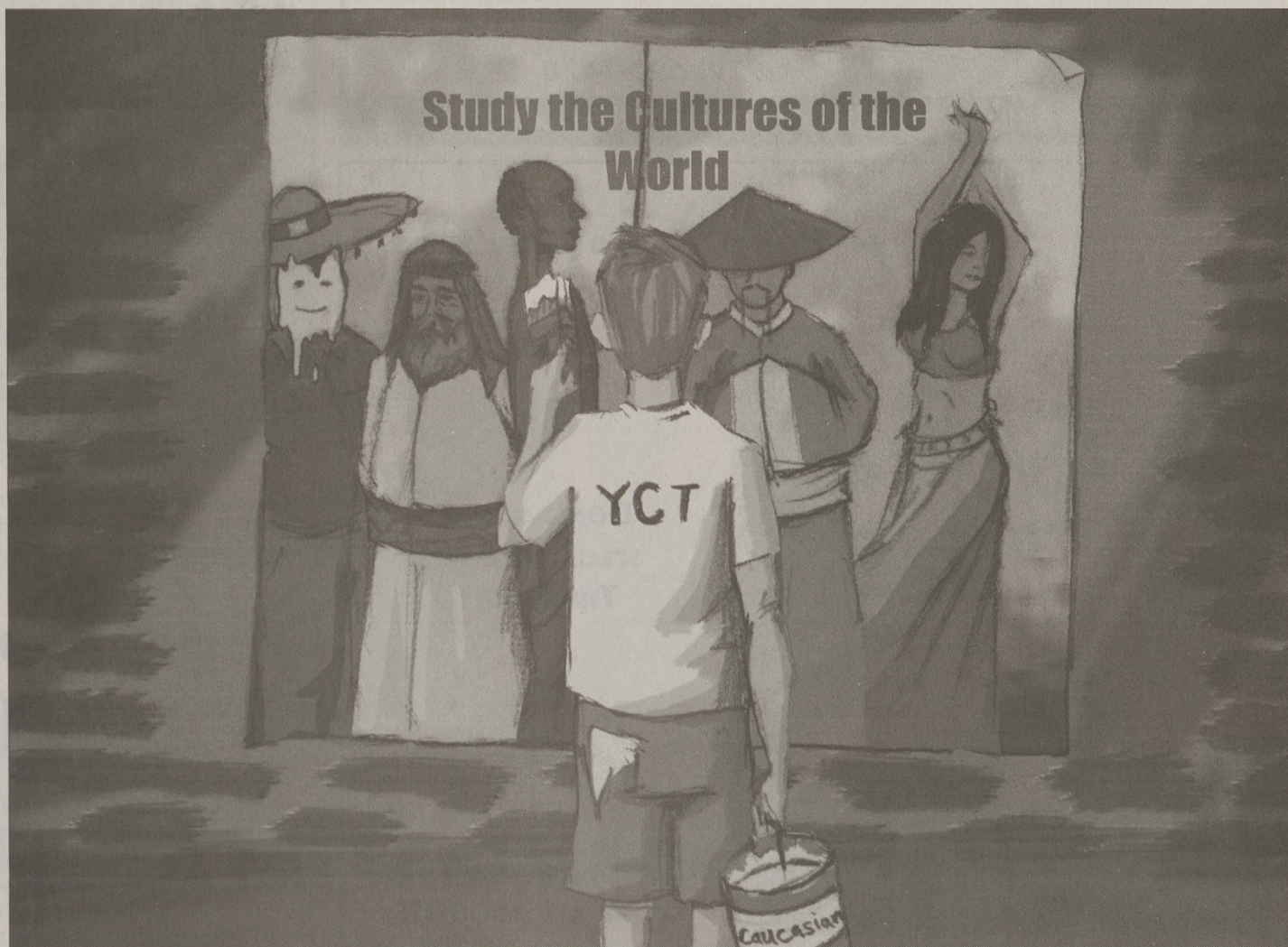
However, the YCT Chapter at A&M has also involved itself in numerous paltry conflicts, similar to that at UT, and has utilized tasteless tactics, serving as shock value to solicit awareness of the issues they oppose or support.

For example, recall that the A&M chapter of the YCT is responsible for the following: the posting of the A&M Professor Watch List, protesting "Coming Out Week," protesting a lecture by Bill Clinton, protesting Ted Kennedy receiving the George Bush Award for Excellence in Public Service, protesting the Diversity Plan, proposing "Straight Pride Week," announcing a scholarship for overcoming the stigma imposed by giving preference to particular racial groups and holding an Affirmative Action Bake Sale.

Each of these events revolve around two issues: race and politics. That is, if any University policy appears to place too much emphasis on other races/cultures, or if any party, person or organization disagrees with the policies of the Republican party or



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President George W. Bush, then a cardinal sin has been committed in the eyes of the YCT.

To illustrate this point further, examine more closely the Kennedy Protest and the bake sale.

When the YCT heckled Senator Kennedy, it did it for one reason only: Kennedy disagreed with Bush over Iraq. What the YCT failed to realize is that Kennedy was receiving an award for distinguished public service, not for acquiescing to all of the president's policies. Kennedy has a public service career that spans decades, through which he has sponsored and championed numerous pieces of legislation that have enhanced many public sectors in our country; most notably in health care. He received the award because he deserved it.

Now look back to the bake sale. While it was cute and amusing to see YCT members selling baked goods to protest affirmative action, one couldn't help but realize that the manner in which the goods were sold — at arbitrary prices based on the individual — literally belittled women, homosexuals and minority groups.

Obviously, this is not to say that organizations should remain silent when salient issues arise. However, if YCT members continue to confront controversial campus issues in this same stubborn and obnoxious manner, they will not only discredit their organization, but also stigmatize the ideological position of conservatism.

The YCT needs to re-prioritize which issues really merit staunch opposition and reconsider the fashion in which it will fight its political battles on campus. If the YCT doesn't change its tactics soon, it will isolate itself from "moderate" students, and no one will even bother listening anymore.

Nicholas Davis is a senior political science major. Graphic by Tony Piedra

### MAIL CALL

#### At any stage, a fetus represents life cycle

In response to a June 7 mail call:

I'm continually amazed at the so-called "pro-life" argument against abortion. How can the spouters be pro-life and at the same time draw this imaginary line in their conscience between life and not-life when not even the doctors who perform abortions can do so and still have peace? Is this a deflection of guilt from themselves, an absolution or a spiteful lack of penance? I think I prefer those possibilities over the alternatives: ignorance, or worse, carelessness. I am not at peace on this issue, and I may never be. Let me tell you why.

Consider the following two people (notice no gender distinction):

Person 1. 8 months pregnant, of poor enough mental health to be incognizant of pregnancy, gets an abortion now with sound mind through medical treatment.

Person 2. Of sound mind, has used a contraceptive.

Can you tell me which of these 2 people is a murderer, and which is not? I can't. In fact, I can't even distinguish between person 1 above and a person who thinks about a sex act without full intent to carry through to birth. A single cell, a "stem" cell, a sperm cell, an egg, a thought, a fetus 2 days after conception, and a fetus

200 days after conception are all exactly the same to me — they are life. If you want a line, then draw it. If afterwards you find that you have blood on your hands, then deal. Whatever you do, withdraw your judgement of others.

Reade Sitton  
Bryan

#### Aggies needed a day to mourn for 9-11

I realize that Ronald Reagan was a beloved President and that it is a loss that he has passed away, but why is A&M giving students a day off from classes on Friday to mourn? Give me a break. When I was a junior at A&M, I remember no such day off on or after 9/11/01, even after President Bush declared a national day of mourning. I guess losing a few thousand of our fellow Americans in the worst terrorist attack on U.S. soil doesn't mean much in Aggieland.

I'd just like to say that, as a native New Yorker and a former student who had a parent working in Tower 2 on 9/11, it would have been nice to have my university recognize that many of its students needed a day to mourn their own family and friends.

Melissa McKeon  
Class of 2003

## Banning of public baptisms a First Amendment violation

How do you know when you have done something outrageously wrong? When you have the Christian Defense Coalition and the American Civil Liberties Union working against you over the same issue.

This is precisely the predicament that park officials at Falmouth Waterfront Park in Virginia have found themselves in.

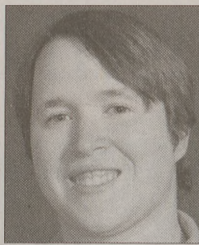
On May 23, The Associated Press reported that the Rev. Todd Pyle, pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Stafford, Va., decided that he would take a few members of his congregation to the waterfront to baptize 12 people because his church has no indoor baptismal font.

Park officials, however, did not like the idea and tried to break up the event on the grounds that a public baptism might be "offensive" to those nearby. This is unacceptable and a clear violation of First Amendment rights.

Has society today become so sensitive that witnessing a peaceful religious ceremony in a park is offensive? There once was the expression, "Your rights end where mine begin." Apparently, the right to not be subjugated to being in the proximity of a religious service is greater than the right to hold the religious service itself.

Or perhaps sensitivity is not the issue. Park officials later said that religious groups need a permit to perform any kind of service in the park, but also admitted that it has no official written policy of this. The whole ordeal seems to have been a random case of religious discrimination.

However, it is understandable that it might be necessary to obtain permits for large, organized gatherings such as church and community-wide picnics, concerts and "big tent revivals." However, there is no reason why small spontaneous gatherings, such as this baptism, should have to obtain permits.



CODY SAIN

Consider a different scenario. Suppose that a small group of high school or college students at a local church decided to meet in the park after the morning church service to have a picnic. One student brings his or her guitar and begins to play and sing contemporary hymns; the others sing along.

Could this spontaneous event be banned from the park under the notion of it being a "religious service?" Few would disagree that it is religious in nature, but should these students be required to get a permit? And if so, if the songs were secular, would a permit still be needed? Is it simply the religious nature of the songs which would require a permit? Very few people would have the courage to say that these kids must go

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through the time and hassle of getting a permit to sing their songs.

What is the difference between one small group singing "praise and worship" songs versus another having baptisms? Besides the sacramental nature of baptism, not much. There is no reason why one activity should be allowed freely and another restricted.

The park is a public park, and the gathering was small and peaceful. If the event was a large, loud gathering of church-goers, or if it was in the public right-of-way or blocking streets, it would be understandable to require a permit. As it was, the actions of the park officials were completely unacceptable.

The ACLU of Virginia made the following comment in its press release: "The rules for religious expression in a public park are actually pretty simple because they must be the same as for all other activities. If the park rules allow people to wade and swim in the river, then they must allow baptisms in the river. If the rules allow groups to gather for cultural, social or political purposes, then they must allow religious gatherings as well. If the park allows the use of amplified sound, then religious voices have the same right to be amplified as other voices."

The Rev. Patrick Mahoney, head of the CDC, threatened to sue if the park refuses to allow future gatherings by religious groups.

"These people are being discriminated against because of the content of their speech," Mahoney said. "It's one of the most egregious violations of the First Amendment I have ever seen."

Many times in cases such as this, the best solution is civil disobedience.

The Rev. Pyle said he will perform his baptism elsewhere, but other churches should not be frightened into having similar activities; then and only then will religious freedoms prevail.

Students at A&M should not dismiss this case as something isolated occurring thousands of miles away. It is not an unfamiliar sight to be walking around campus and see a group of people praying or singing hymns. There are even stories of some ministers performing baptisms in the various fountains around campus.

If the actions of the officials at Falmouth Waterfront Park go unchallenged or are even deemed appropriate, it is entirely possible that religious freedoms might be violated close to home.

Cody Sain is a junior philosophy major.

