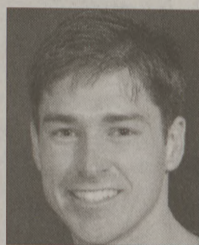


Challenging the black community

Bill Cosby's statements on self-destructive nature of black America long overdue



NICHOLAS DAVIS

It's time to lay it on the line. There is a problem in black America today, and it's high time someone said something about it. "The Blacks of the 1960s marched and were hit in the face with rocks to get an education, and now we have these knuckleheads walking around. These lower economic people are not holding up their end in this deal. These people are not parenting. They're buying things for their kids: \$500 sneakers, for what? And they won't spend \$200 for Hooked on Phonics. I can't even talk the way these people talk: why you ain't, where you is."

Anyone have a problem with these remarks? Is someone out there chomping at the bit to label the speaker of these words a racist? Most likely the answer is yes, and this is precisely why the vast majority of Americans steer clear of acquiescing to such statements because they fear being deemed a racist also for doing nothing more than speaking truthfully.

However, these words belong to America's favorite TV father, Bill Cosby, who stated them at the Constitutional Hall event in Washington D.C., commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Brown v. Board of Education ruling.

Remarkably, the comedian's speech received applause and laughter, though the fact that it was a multicultural convention may have had something to do with that. Regardless, reactions in the black community have been mixed. Some agree with Cosby, while others either acknowledge the truthfulness of the remarks but criticize the callous manner in which the statements were made or simply condemn his words altogether.

For example, Fox News reported that after Cosby's remarks the NAACP President Kweisi Mfume and NAACP Legal Defense Fund Head Theodore Shaw approached the

podium looking "stone faced." Shaw reportedly announced to the crowd that most people on welfare are not blacks, and that many of the problems his organization addresses are not self-inflicted.

To illustrate further, in his article, "What Bill Cosby Should be Talking About," Time Magazine's Christopher Farley chided the comedian, not for what he said, but for where he said it. Or, more appropriately, in front of whom he said it.

"50 years after the Civil Rights Movement, the black community can no longer expect American citizens to believe that blacks do not have opportunities at their disposal ..."

Farley stated, "Cosby broke the unwritten rule of keeping black dirty laundry in black washing machines." That is, Cosby should have refrained from speaking his mind in the presence of other racial groups, specifically whites, even if the statements were truthful, for as Marlon Brando put it, "you never discuss business outside the family."

Such an outlook is ridiculous. If the NAACP is to continue proclaiming that American society, again mostly referring to whites, has culpability in the problems lower socioeconomic blacks face, and a responsibility to rectify them, then there is no need for "behind closed-door discussions." All possible explanations to the plight must be raised out in the open, regardless of

the blame they ascribe to specific groups.

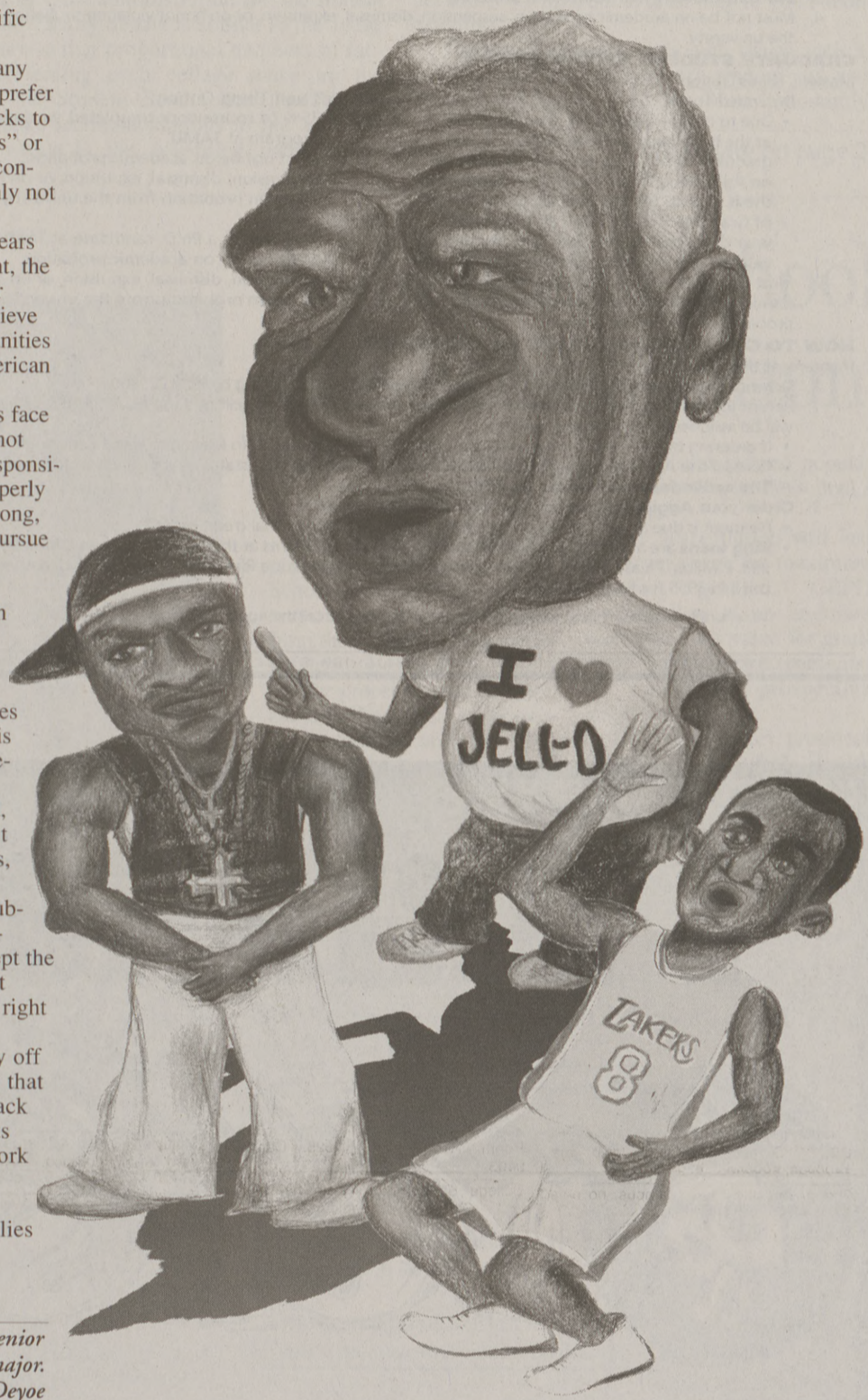
Perhaps what Farley, and many others in the black community prefer is for lower socioeconomic blacks to obtain somewhat of a "free pass" or excuse for the self-destructive conduct in which many, but certainly not all, engage in.

Here's the bottom line: 50 years after the Civil Rights Movement, the black community can no longer expect American citizens to believe that blacks do not have opportunities at their disposal to live the American dream and become successful. Though many in the inner cities face tremendous hardships, this cannot exonerate parents from their responsibility to raise their children properly by teaching them right from wrong, to develop self-discipline and pursue higher education.

When 13 percent of African Americans fail to complete high school, when 70 percent of all out-of-wedlock births are to black mothers and when the incarceration rate for black males between the ages of 18 and 24 is eight times that of whites, something is wrong.

This is a social problem and, as Bill Cosby stated, "You can't just blame white people for this, man, you can't." And it's not rational to assume that some public policy will rectify this situation entirely. Nothing can, except the people themselves. This is what Cosby was stating and he hit it right on the nose.

So instead of writing Cosby off as a black elitist, or preferring that such comments be kept in "black washing machines," perhaps its time to accept the truth and work toward rectifying it through a cultural transformation that places more emphasis on families and education.



Nicholas Davis is a senior political science major. Graphic by Rylie Deyoe

MAIL CALL

A dog is preferable to George W. Bush

In response to Cody Sain's June 21 column:

Just last week, German researchers presented scientific evidence that a border collie named Rico could understand more than 200 words and can learn new ones as quickly as many children.

While not exactly a "yellow dog," I would gladly vote for Rico over George W. Bush in the upcoming elections, if for no other reason than her superior command of the dictionary.

While I feel John Kerry does have many strengths of his own that would make him a superior President, here I will just suggest that voting "against" a candidate rather than "for" the alternative candidate is not a concept unique to this election. It happens all the time.

Anybody remember the 2000 election? That was about Clinton and nothing more. Mr. Sain is correct that many people are voting "for" Kerry because of a dislike of Bush, but there are likewise many people who will vote for Bush because of a dislike of Democrats or of liberals.

There is a polarization evident today in America unlike any time in the recent past. I would suggest that Bush's policies at home and abroad have led to such polarization which can only be bad for our country. Therefore a change is in order; whether in the form of a man named Kerry or a dog named Rico, we need to change paths.

Robert Powell
graduate student

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: 015 Reed McDonald, 1111 TAMU, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Fax: (979) 845-2647. Email: mailcall@thebattalion.net

Limiting non-related people cohabitating unreasonable

The neighbors had put up with enough loud parties, crowded streets and trash buildup. Incessant on gaining revenge against the unknowing college students around them, community members of College Park did something they felt more effective than calling in yet another noise violation or attempting to speak with their younger neighbors. They made it the local government's problem.

Don't let the quaint historic houses and proximity to campus fool you. The College Park subdivision, located east of Texas Avenue across from campus, has become a breeding ground for conflicts that threaten to endanger the privileges enjoyed by the largest sect of College Station citizens: the students.

It is undeniable that the community depends upon students for its very existence, but unfortunately the permanent residents seem to have forgotten this fact yet again. Their attempt to make College Station better for themselves by seeking implementation of unnecessary legislation would not only burden students financially, but fail to solve the actual problems.

This spring, the tension between permanent residents and students reached new heights when the actions of the students drove the other residents to bring their complaints before the College Station City Council, aiming to reduce the number of non-related people allowed to cohabitate in a single-family dwelling from the current limitation of four to three or two.

Besides the obvious appearance that the residents are attempting to alienate students living on limited budgets, the root of the problem is a false belief that the less students in their neighborhood, the faster problems would be solved and the better their subdivision would appear to outsiders. The solitary act of decreasing the number of students in a

house, however, doesn't automatically guarantee fewer problems or smaller parties.

As a result of the complaints came the formation of a task force that spent six weeks evaluating a laundry list of concerns from permanent residents, ranging from recurring noise violations to overcrowded streets.

On May 27 the summary of the task force's recommendations was presented to the City Council, which will decide what action to take from these recommendations on June 24.

The complaining residents may claim they want a neighborhood where college students and older residents can peacefully coexist. Their actions, however, indicate otherwise. The residents formed a petition to reduce the number of non-related people in a single-family home, which only communicates hostility instead of cooperation.

This one-step solution advocated by the residents is not only financially impossible for most students, but ignores that the architecture of many multiple-bedroom houses throughout College Station were built with students in mind.

The less extreme potential legislation advocated by the task force would apply a reduced number of non-relatives for particular neighborhoods that the City Council considers "historic."

The neighborhoods that would fall under this legislation, such as the College Park subdivision and the Southside district, are no more historic than many other neighborhoods within College Station; they are just filled with neighbors who will make any student who does move in wish he hadn't.

If these problems were just about noise violations and parking problems, identical situations could be found in cities statewide. These complaints are only symptoms of the deeper problem, which is the division between permanent citizens of College Station and the students, who are treated as second-class citizens when it comes to any legislation that could favor them.

In the same breath that residents ask students to be more responsible neighbors, resi-

dents act like disciplining parents aiming to teach the students a lesson for the audacity of having four cars parked near a four-bedroom house. If this attitude of permanent residents continues, the students will only adopt a resentful and defiant attitude toward local government.

The complaining neighbors in the College Park area haven't stopped to consider that if the legislation did pass, making it unaffordable for most students, it would leave them without occupants to fill the houses. Abandoned houses with overgrown yards are apparently better to them than an extra car parked in the street.

Granted, the permanent residents have a point: Loud parties and consistently crowded streets are not only an annoyance but reflect poorly upon the neighborhood. Unfortunately, the solutions they came up with don't solve anything but instead placed the blame on an undue recipient.

College students are the easiest scapegoat to carry the blame that really belongs to the local municipal services faulty performance and the lack of enforcement of current codes.

It comes as little surprise that this is exactly what the task force found, who in its final recommendations advised as its foremost suggestion that the city invest more into service improvement and enforcement of codes, said Phillip Shackelford, Student Senate Speaker and task force member.

In order for true community peace, the permanent residents must accept the natural tendencies and financial burdens of college students, and the students must attempt to take on the role of responsible community members. If set standards were enforced and both college students and permanent residents worked together, perhaps the community could peacefully coexist without dramatic government intervention.

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