

# OPINION

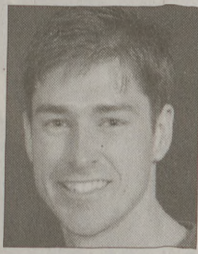
THE BATTALION

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## Moore than propaganda

'Fahrenheit 9/11' deserves attention from both conservatives and liberals

Michael Moore, the man who confronted General Motors in "Roger and Me" and duked it out with the National Rifle Association in "Bowling for Columbine," now turns his wrath on, as he sees it, a corrupt administration and an illegitimate president who stole the 2000 election in his newest film "Fahrenheit 9/11": a film about greed, deception, murder, power and vengeance.



NICHOLAS DAVIS

Sounds exciting, and if one had no idea as to who the director was, they would wonder what Hollywood stars would grace the big screen of this twisted tale.

However, the film is touted as a documentary.

Not surprisingly, though, the ideological right perceives it as a complete misrepresentation of facts and blatant lies about President Bush, while the left views it, according to Richard Corliss of Time Magazine, as the equivalent of, "a secular 'The Passion of the Christ.'"

Nevertheless, regardless of what spectrum of the political field one subscribes to, this film surprisingly merits attention. Don't listen to the conservative hype. It's not simply "a pack of lies" like Rush Limbaugh stated or "a sinister exercise in moral frivolity, crudely disguised as an exercise in seriousness" as Christopher Hitchens believes.

It's more than just propaganda; it is a film that raises some valid points. The film points out the Bush family's disturbing business connections with the Saudi government and even Osama bin Laden's family through the Carlyle Group.

Moore also brings attention to the large amount of Saudi capital investment in the United States. Previous talks of the Unocal company, which has ties to Bush associates, with the Taliban regarding constructing a gas pipeline across Afghanistan, is seen in the film.

Moore also criticizes Bush for sending too few troops to Afghanistan and Iraq, suggesting that the war in Iraq was an attempt to divert attention from the people really responsible for 9/11, and unjustified because Saddam wasn't a threat and never tried to harm Americans. Moore presents the original copy of Bush's military record which contains the name of a Bush acquaintance with connections to the Saudis to indicate that the Bush administration doctored up his military records. The film indicates that the Coalition of the Willing is compiled of countries with negligible power, thus it is really the United States fighting alone and American soldiers are dying in vain.

Clearly many of these assertions are a bit far fetched but some, especially the Saudi connections and the tremendous influence that Middle Eastern business has on upper class Americans and politicians, must be analyzed and taken seriously.

Here's the truth: Moore's film is indeed slanted to the left and through sophisticated editing, Bush, is portrayed as nothing more than a dumb cowboy from Texas, with big ties to the oil

industry, especially the Saudis, and who has his daddy's money, power and influence to thank for his success.

But honestly, if this offends anyone in the audience, it only illuminates one thing: the individual is simply a partisan unwilling to look at the film objectively and evaluate it without his biases and political ideology clouding the issue. His mind was made up before entering the theater.

Clearly, Moore makes some weak points, and often never offers the other side of the story, but this is why people who see the film should reevaluate many of the events leading up to the war in Iraq prior to seeing it. Don't simply walk into the film ignorant about the subject matter.

One thing Moore fails to specifically state, yet his presentation of the material clearly displays it, is that America's main problem today is the lack of statesmen representing the public.

Unfortunately, the representatives in office, both Republicans and Democrats, are self-interested, power-hungry, business-savvy, uninformed people concerned about two things: their own success, and appealing to their constituents just enough to be reelected.

Moore chides representatives, as he should, since almost none of them have a child in the military and also hammers home the point that the only people really defending our country are those of the lower middle

class, and the disenfranchised underclass who often have no where else to turn other than the military for a career.

These elements are not just a pack of lies. Truthfully, big business controls politics, not the needs of the majority of Americans and anyone who believes differently is living in Oz.

Already this film is doing well, projected to gross more than \$100 million in three weeks, and it should because people need to see it.



Nicholas Davis is a senior political science major. Graphic by Gracie Arenas

"Many of these assertions are a bit far fetched but some ... must be analyzed and taken seriously."

### MAIL CALL

#### Benefits of private loans

In response to Kristina Butler's June 29 column:

Ms. Butler is entitled to her opinion, but opinions should be based on facts. The student loan program is providing loans at the lowest interest rates ever. The program which she condemns as corrupt - the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP) - last year provided more than 5 million students and families - including those from Texas A&M - with \$50 billion in guaranteed student loans at no net cost to the federal government.

Meanwhile, the the program she touts as more efficient - the government's Direct Loan program - has lost nearly \$11 billion since its inception in 1994, according to the General Accounting Office. She cites a statistic that shows direct loans are cheaper for the taxpayer. Ms. Butler fails to mention two critical points. But this statistic is a projection, and not the program's actual performance. Also, this projection is from 1994! Direct Lending has had 10 years of experience, and its record is clear.

Regardless of Direct Lending's woeful financial performance, we believe schools should have a choice for their lending needs. Competition between the government-run and private programs has made both more responsive to the needs of students and schools. Competition has lowered

loan costs and allowed schools to obtain better student loan service without compromising quality. Texas A&M is able to demand and receive better loan services and product choices for its students and families because of this competition.

Finally, Ms. Butler implies that Sallie Mae uses "dirty tricks" to win the business of financial aid officers. This is not only untrue, but impugns the reputation and professionalism of financial aid professionals, who are often the unsung champions of finding the financing that allows students to attend and graduate great universities like Texas A&M. She owes them an apology.

Tom Joyce  
Vice President  
Corporate Communications  
Sallie Mae

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

## Legislative deadlines ruined tuition forum's potential

Tuition increases have been a major matter overshadowing the events of the past year at Texas A&M University, and the specter of possible future increases has made the amount current and future students will have to pay uncertain.

But recently, there was a forum held on campus to solicit opinions from students, faculty and staff on matters related to tuition and how the University is run.

The forum, run by consulting firm MGT America, allowed participants to write their comments on two-by-three foot pads placed on the walls around the room, each related to a particular area of the study.

The information collected by the forum will be used in a larger audit of A&M, conducted by MGT, which will be given to the Legislative Budget Board, and eventually presented to the Legislature at its regular session next year.

A similar audit is being conducted at the University of Texas. It seems as though members of the state government have awakened to the strains put upon Texas families by tuition deregulation, and the fact that Boards of Regents do not have to justify increases to anyone.

But the timing of this forum suggests those who commissioned it may be more interested in meeting arbitrary deadlines and

appearances than ensuring the most thorough data gathering process is used. For the forum to have its fullest potential, it should have occurred during the spring or fall semesters instead of the summer.

According to a news article and sources at the Legislative Budget Board, the goal is to get the audit finished by this fall, so it will be ready to be presented by the time the Legislature convenes for their next special session.

This explains why the part of the audit that sought input from the student body as well as the faculty and staff here at Texas A&M was conducted in the summer.

Unfortunately, the result is that most students and quite a few employees are not around to participate. Although their opinion was solicited, it is very easy for one e-mail from the University to get lost in someone's inbox.

The Office of the Provost said that there will not be any more forums scheduled on campus to solicit input from students or staff. The problem here rests not with A&M, but the time table agreed to by the LBB.

The LBB was bound to conduct this audit by legislation passed in the last regular session. They issued a proposal for consulting firms to evaluate the universities over a broad spectrum of

issues, which related to almost all aspects of university governance and tuition.

But as part of that process, which was eventually won by MGT, the LBB agreed to a timeline for the audit. This is where the error occurred. If the LBB was committed to getting the best, most relevant data, they would have made sure the audit included extensive surveying of students, staff and faculty when they would all be on campus.

But the LBB was apparently more concerned about making a deadline than getting the best information. This might not be so upsetting if this report was not going to be presented to the Legislature.

So now the whole Legislature will have what could be termed incomplete information on the opinions of students, staff and faculty and the status of how things are being run at A&M.

The LBB should be ashamed of itself for such haphazard planning and should remedy this by conducting more forums during the fall.

If the LBB wanted to make sure they received the best information, they should have made sure that surveys were done in the spring or fall. Unfortunately, the quality of their information does not seem to have been their top priority.

David Shoemaker is a senior management major.

