

OPINION

THE BATTALION

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PAGE BY LINDSAY FORSON

Issue of life or death

Capital punishment upholds justice and preserves the sanctity of human life



CINDY
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In 1993, John Moreno, a San Antonio convenience store clerk, was murdered for his car keys and the \$44 in his register. A security video clearly showed him begging for his life when the killer, Andrew Flores, shot him in the head and rifled through his pockets as he lay

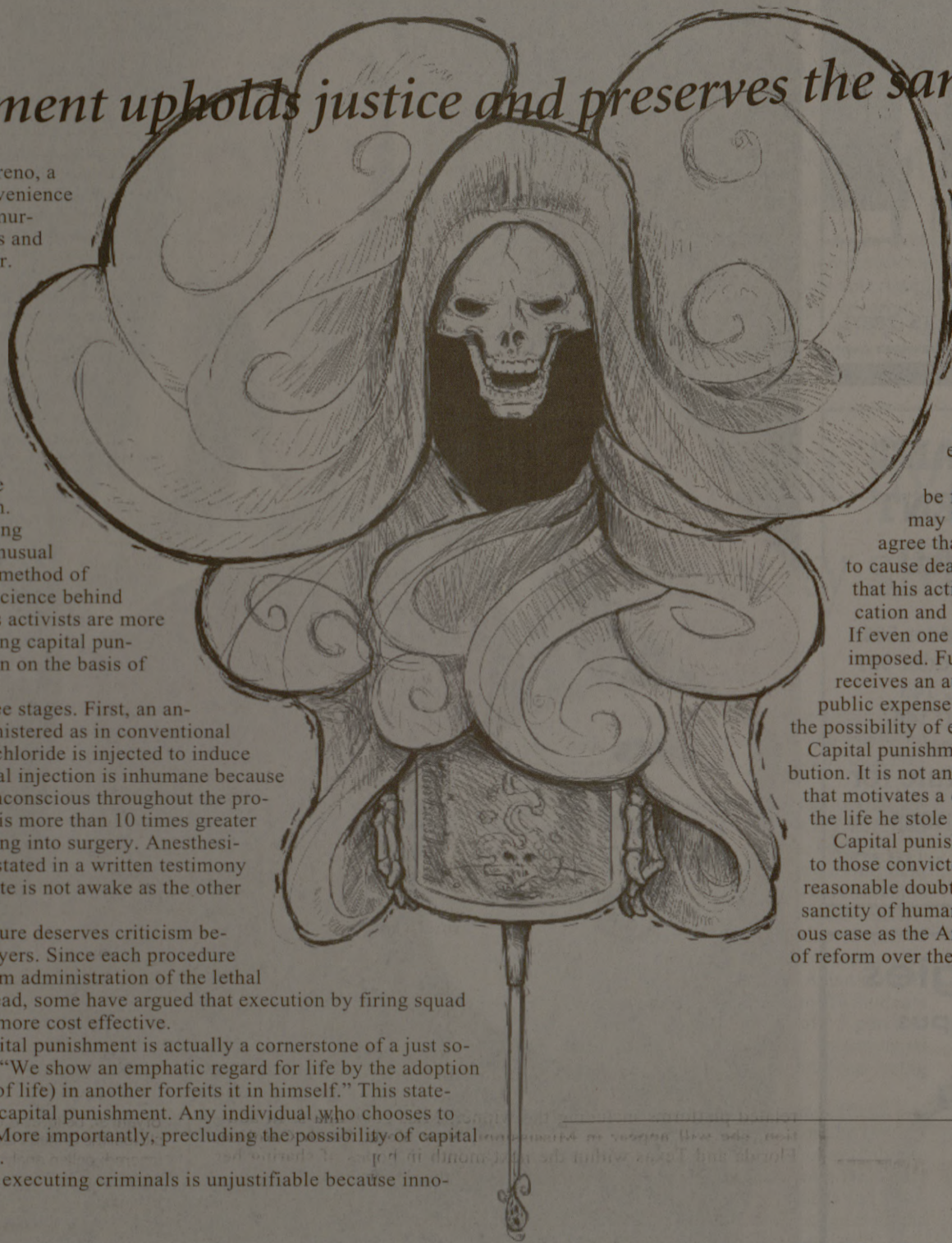
dying. Flores was convicted of this crime and sentenced to death by lethal injection. Now, death penalty opponents are claiming that this sentence constitutes cruel and unusual punishment and that lethal injection is a method of torturing criminals. However, the weak science behind these claims suggests that criminal rights activists are more interested in pursuing their goal of banning capital punishment than in evaluating lethal injection on the basis of available evidence.

Lethal injection is administered in three stages. First, an anesthetic and a paralyzing agent are administered as in conventional surgical operations, and then potassium chloride is injected to induce cardiac arrest. Opponents claim that lethal injection is inhumane because the anesthetic may not keep an inmate unconscious throughout the procedure. However, the dose administered is more than 10 times greater than that given to the average patient going into surgery. Anesthesiologist and Texas state Sen. Kyle Janek stated in a written testimony that such a dose guarantees that the inmate is not awake as the other drugs are administered.

If anything, the lethal injection procedure deserves criticism because of its complexity and cost to taxpayers. Since each procedure costs \$86 and takes about 18 minutes from administration of the lethal drugs for the inmate to be pronounced dead, some have argued that execution by firing squad or hanging would be faster, simpler and more cost effective.

As cold as these arguments sound, capital punishment is actually a cornerstone of a just society. Philosopher John Stuart Mill said, "We show an emphatic regard for life by the adoption of a rule that he who violates that right (of life) in another forfeits it in himself." This statement summarizes the moral necessity of capital punishment. Any individual who chooses to commit murder forfeits his right to life. More importantly, precluding the possibility of capital punishment actually devalues human life.

Critics of the death penalty argue that executing criminals is unjustifiable because inno-



cent people may be put to death. While every precaution should be taken to prevent such a tragedy, this argument is not tenable. All justice systems revoke the rights of those convicted of crimes, with punishments ranging from fines (right to property), to imprisonment (right to self-determination) to execution (right to life). Since no system is capable of administering justice flawlessly, it is inevitable that the rights of innocent people will be violated. For this reason, a good judicial system should make it more difficult to convict an individual of crimes that carry more extreme sentences.

In Texas, there are many procedures that must be followed exactly before a convicted criminal may be sentenced to death. Jurors must unanimously agree that the defendant willfully and deliberately acted to cause death, that he is likely to be dangerous in the future, that his actions are disproportionate to any possible provocation and that there are no other mitigating circumstances. If even one juror disagrees, the death penalty cannot be imposed. Furthermore, once sentenced to death, a prisoner receives an automatic appeal and competent legal council at public expense. These precautions are all designed to minimize the possibility of executing an innocent person.

Capital punishment is a means of implementing justice, not retribution. It is not any perceived insignificance of the criminal's life that motivates a death sentence, but rather the profound worth of the life he stole from his victim.

Capital punishment, administered by some humane means to those convicted of atrocious crimes beyond the shadow of a reasonable doubt, is necessary to uphold justice and to affirm the sanctity of human life. Courts should not use such an unambiguous case as the Andrew Flores murder trial to impose their concept of reform over the just sentence imposed by a judge and jury.

Cindy McReynolds is a senior electrical engineering major.
Graphic by Ivan Flores.

Diversity should apply to both race and academics



JONATHAN
SMITH
COLUMNIST

When the Texas Legislature passed a resolution on Nov. 1, 1866 to establish Texas A&M, the state's first public university, the legislators had no idea the school would grow to its size or prestige. Yet its goal to create a university to serve all Texans is still fundamentally the driving force behind the

academic excellence.

Unfortunately, A&M serves some groups of Texans more than its serves others, yet the administration is working hard to make sure that A&M educates every group that supports the school by paying state taxes.

New successes in increasing diversity allow for more Texans to be part of the A&M tradition, yet the administration should set bolder goals to represent types of Texans not traditionally associated with the University.

Recently, the administrators at A&M were pleased to discover that the enrollment numbers for entering students better represented the diverse make-up of the state. The Eagle reported that the University recorded an increase of incoming minority freshmen for the first time since 1996. This fall, 2.9 percent of the freshmen were black, an increase of 35 percent; 12 percent of the freshmen were Hispanic, an increase of 26 percent; 3.8 percent of freshmen were Asian, an increase of 15 percent; and 1 percent of the freshmen were Native American, an increase of 41 percent.

The increase of minorities entering the school should be good news to all Aggies. Even those who do not appreciate the administration's efforts to increase minority enrollment should applaud the fact that their school instantly becomes more respectable and appreciated by Texans who do not have direct experience with the school. Numbers now

prove that A&M cannot ever again be wrongfully called a white cult. We will all hear less of the Aggie jokes now that a more diverse population defends its good name.

Yet the doubters of plans to increase minority enrollment do present a good point: Administrators should do more to attract students who are different for reasons other than race alone. Now that the tides are turning, the administration needs to put more emphasis of attracting students from parts of Texas society that the school has never seriously courted.

The most neglected part of A&M currently is its liberal arts college. The under-funding of programs and the lack of strong efforts to improve the College of Liberal Arts' reputation makes it known that future artists, journalists, musicians and other ultra-creative types are not welcome here.

If the administration only wishes to pay lip service to diversity, it will continue to focus only on race, but one possible reason it has taken eight years to win back the minority crowd is because many don't want to

just be engineers, businessmen, lawyers, doctors and scientists.

A&M is changing in ways that couldn't have been expected 100 or even 10 years ago. The administration's actions toward its goals have now proved to be a success. The administration needs to set bolder goals that focus on issues other than race, to continue the process of changing A&M to better reflect its original purpose.

Jonathan Smith is a junior history major.

MAILCALL

Planned Parenthood's main objective is helping women

In response to the 40 Days for Life and anti-Planned Parenthood movements on campus, I would like to say that as a woman and a pro-choice supporter, I feel that the propaganda displayed on campus is an attempt to unfairly discredit Planned Parenthood as an organization that "hurts women." If any of the members of the anti-choice organizations on campus had visited a Planned Parenthood clinic, they would know that Planned Parenthood's main objective is to prevent abortion by providing contraceptives and health information to women as well as providing health exams for women at low costs.

Ten percent of the patients at Planned Parenthood's nationwide actually have abortions; the other 90 percent are there for information, testing and health services. Now unfortunately, with the protests surrounding the Planned Parenthood in Bryan, many women are afraid to have their exams and receive their contraceptives at the facility, and this is disheartening.

As women, we should not allow the fanatically conservative few who stand outside of Planned Parenthood make our decisions for us. Women have come a long way from the days when social pressures forced them into unsafe and illegal abortions. Let's not have to revert back to those days.

Marina Corona
Class of 2008

Abortion advocates ignore unborn child's right to life

I am not at all surprised at how the Aggie Democrats choose to get offended at pro-lifers' efforts in defending the dignity of human life. Their only argument is a woman's "right to choose," but when the actual facts about abortion are presented, they take offense and try to turn the issue away from the unborn child's rights and on to women's rights.

The president of Aggie Democrats claims no one should tell a woman what she can or cannot do to her own body. In the case of a pregnant woman, it is not only her body. There is a completely separate human being in the womb that has its own right to life, just as its mother has a right to life, but yet feels she has the right to abort it. I commend YCT for its efforts to proclaim the dignity of every person, and I hope that pro-choice advocates would take the responsibility to discuss the actual issue of abortion instead of running from the facts by taking offense at things such as chalk hearts on the ground.

Charles Vreeland
Class of 2005

Aggies must register to vote in upcoming election

There are only about eight more days left to register to vote in time to receive your registration card for this November's Presidential election. It takes very little time to pick up a registration form at your local post office, one minute to fill it out and less than one minute to mail it out. Think about it: only a few moments and you could help make a decision that will change the course of the world forever. Take part in our democratic society by simply utilizing the right that so many fought so hard for us to have today. Say, "Thank you, and I do care about our future," by taking a few minutes to register to vote, but do it soon, or it will be too late.

Miguel Hernandez
Class of 2004

On-campus parking poses problems for students

As a student worker for three years during my time at Texas A&M, I was forced this summer to purchase a parking permit to park at my place of employment on campus. I guess that money was not sufficient for Transportation Services, because I was ticketed for parking in my lot when I had to work overtime a few weeks ago.

Last week, when utilizing the ridiculous football ticket allocation process, where no parking exists, I was ticketed yet again for being one minute over in a 30-minute space. This morning, while using another service on campus, where once again no parking existed, I was ticketed. When I tried to pay these unfair tickets on campus where, no surprise, no parking was available, I was informed that this facility does not accept Aggie Bucks. Aggie Bucks are an official form of payment everywhere else on campus and at most prominent local businesses. So I went to charge the fees and I guess I should have expected the extra amount they charged for using a credit card not preferred by this University. Parking needs improvement at A&M.

Sara Petrzalka
Class of 2005

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