

November 7, 2006

An Open Letter to the Aggie Family:

Yesterday was a sad day for Texas A&M. It was brought to my attention that individuals who appear to be Aggie students had posted to a public web site a home-made video that is so utterly disgusting that, regardless of race, religion, or background, I believe virtually any member of our Aggie family would be outraged and ashamed if they viewed it. The content of the video is offensive on many levels and would be so to all Aggies, but is particularly insulting and hurtful to members of our Black community. The hateful video is not simply an example of poor judgment and insensitivity; it appears to have been purposefully produced to insult and demean. When one member of the Aggie family is insulted, we are all insulted. I find the content of the video inexcusable and I believe virtually all Aggies join me in that belief.

I cannot fully express my disappointment and embarrassment that Texas A&M students may have been involved in this matter. While I respect and value the constitutional right to free speech, I can neither condone nor accept that right being disrespected in this manner. We believe we have identified the students allegedly involved in producing the video and are directing them to meet with Student Affairs officials to discuss their actions, as well as their future at Texas A&M. The university has already contacted the web host and demanded that the video be removed, and they have done so.

The university will be hosting a community forum at 7 p.m. this evening in Rudder Tower, Room 601 to provide students, faculty and staff an opportunity to express their opinions about how the university moves forward and overcomes this disgraceful episode.

In this vein, I applaud the editors of The Battalion for strongly condemning the actions of students whose behavior is counter to everything Aggies stand for -- loyalty, character, integrity and respect.

I deeply regret that anyone was hurt by viewing the video, or simply knowing or hearing about it. At a time when Texas A&M is doing more than ever to attract, retain and graduate a diverse student body, the damage done by the insensitivity of two or three individuals is immeasurable. I am extremely disappointed by their behavior, but even more saddened by the hurt this might bring to many members of our campus and extended communities.

Finally, I am truly outraged by this moronic video. Those who made it are no true Aggies, and I expect they will have to live with the consequences of their actions in this matter for a very long time.

Robert M. Gates, President
Texas A&M University