

“An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do—” Words every Aggie has heard and pledged in some form or another. While this honor code is most obviously pertinent to our schoolwork- quizzes, exams, or homework assignments- the value of integrity far surpasses the classroom. It may be possible to garner influence and admiration without it, but in order to contribute something truly positive to this world, integrity must be the guiding force behind everything we do. When the lines between right and wrong are constantly being blurred, living with integrity will provide a reliable foundation from which to confidently look upon the world and face the complexities of life.

I am of the belief that it is more important to be honest than to be well-liked, especially when the cost of dishonesty is as high as leading others astray from the truth. It can be uncomfortable to stand against the crowd, or even against friends and family, but it is more disturbing to me to sit complacent, smiling and nodding along with ideas that betray my sense of right and wrong. It is a common theme in today’s society that tolerance is the key to peace and harmony. I raise the notion that peace is not the same as pretending nothing is wrong; anything that requires us to abandon what has been regarded as virtuous for thousands of years is worth questioning.

How often are we presented with the promotion of this obsessive compromise, the suggestion that an unwillingness to change is in itself a flaw? Rather than doubting my tenacity in the face of these criticisms, I remind myself that by tolerating injustice, I undermine the importance of my beliefs, diminishing their status as something worth standing up for. When a threat to truth presents itself, integrity informs us that confronting it is not an act of aggression but rather a justified defense.

We are all taught as children not to lie to others, but it is equally damaging to lie to ourselves in order to conform to the twisted narrative of moral relativism. I question the possibility of

performing these mental gymnastics to live in a world where everything is okay, while still managing to feel satisfied with oneself at the core. Although it may be daunting at times, there is an inherent sense of stability and self-security that comes with crusading for what is right. When we hear stories of martyrs and activists who died for what they believe in, we do not admonish them for being too staunch in their beliefs. Rather, we applaud their ability to profess the truth even when it means giving up everything else. Even in the face of ridicule and persecution, the most virtuous of us take consolation in the knowledge that the degree of their opposition only signifies the level of their impact.

This way of living is certainly easier said than done, but the benefits of upholding the truth overwhelmingly exceed the costs. I aim to have a contagious effect on the people I meet, those whose minds might be changed, as well as those who lack the voice to speak their minds with equal alacrity. The most direct path to achieving this goal is through consistency of character and a heedless attitude towards the consequences of upholding truth, both of which are attributes awarded by the relentless pursuit of integrity. I challenge myself, along with anyone who feels an obligation to stand up for what is right, to reject the tolerationist mindset and wear the truth proudly on our sleeves.