

Campus racism

African-American student leaders recount discrimination, prejudice

This is the third in a three-part series examining issues facing African-American students at Texas A&M University. Leaders of various African-American student organizations were asked to participate in a round table discussion on the state of racial relations at A&M. *The Battalion* formulated several questions to facilitate discussion and encouraged open and honest dialogue among the participants.

Adrienne Ballare: president of National Association of Black Journalists
Event Broussard: representative from Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity
El J Brown: representative from EsCEL conference
Kendal Davis: president of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity
Scott Jagan: president of NAACP
Tammy Henry: president of Black Awareness Committee
Rashida James: president of African-American Business Society
Proton Jenkins: president of Gamma Phi Delta Christian Fraternity
Nat Johnson: president of Pan-Hellenic Council and president of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity
Joe O'Byrne: representative from the National Society of Black Engineers
Samuel Ogunbemi: president of African Students Association
Caris Pea: president of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity
Wendra Simpson: vice-chair of Black Awareness Committee
Tate Uphaus: president of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority

ROBERT HYNCEK/THE BATTALION

BY APRIL YOUNG AND MEREDITH HIGHT
The Battalion

Question 3: How is the academic environment on campus, in your classes and the faculty representation on campus? Do you feel like you are lacking mentors?

Johnson: I am going to class, and so I am not really worried about that. I know that there is not going to be a whole lot of black people in my class. I mean I KNOW that there is not going to be a whole lot of black people in my class, but that is not an issue to me, personally.

Young: My whole thing is that when you go into a class, if it is a small class then you know you are going to be the only one, and then when I go into a larger class, then I know that there is going to be one or two. But it is not that I want to see another black person, but I think this peers into the problem: how comfortable do I feel going into a class, and turning to the black person next to me and asking if I could borrow their notes, I would feel more comfortable asking a black person. That is my whole issue, I know that I am there to learn.

Jenkins: My question is why? It goes back to what I was saying in the beginning, it is your comfort zone. 'Yeah, I am the only one.' I am one of six [senior] black brothers in the Corps [of Cadets]. I am a minority [because I am]

black, and then I am a minority because I am black and in the Corps, I think we have to get out of this mind set of us and them. We are all students here at A&M, we are all trying to get the degree so we can go out there and get a job. We don't try to mingle with them. I think that [the] only way we are all going to truly come together is if we go to them. We shouldn't be waiting for them to come to us and try to make this thing work. We have to go to them, because the majority of the time, they feel uncomfortable around us anyway. But if we are secure in who we are, then we should be able to go to them.

James: I don't know about all of you, but I know that I have been through plenty occasions when you go into a class and nobody sits near you. That hurts my feelings. Everybody sits around me, [and] people will get up and move.

Several people: I have not had that happen to me.

James: Every time I go to sit down, people will move.
Ogunbemi: Yeah, that is true, but then I get up and I go sit beside them. They are not going to ask you to get up.

James: It is like 'Oh lord, I am the representative again.' For me, I am actually afraid. Because sometimes they will ask a question, and I know that I know the answer. I am afraid that if I am wrong other people in the class are going to think, 'Oh that black person in class, she is stupid.' I am just saying this for me. I don't want my people to be misrepresented.

Hight: Do you agree with that?

Johnson: That is not a race issue, that is your own personal issue. I will say whatever I think and I will be confident in it that I said what I was thinking, and if I am wrong then I am wrong. Anybody else could have been wrong. It is not because of the fact that I am black that I was wrong. I was just wrong [because] I did not know the answer.

Ogunbemi: Be truthful. Some of them don't want to sit with you. Most of the time some of them are scared, and they will not sit beside you.

Johnson: There are some white people that I am scared of.

Hight: What are [white people] scared of?

Uphaus: Of what they don't know. They are scared of the unknown. They don't know who I am. I am a black person. They don't know about my heritage or about my culture. They are scared to get to know me. Why would you be scared to get to know somebody? They are scared of the unknown.

Hight: So it's getting to know someone as an individual, and not as the token black person in the class?

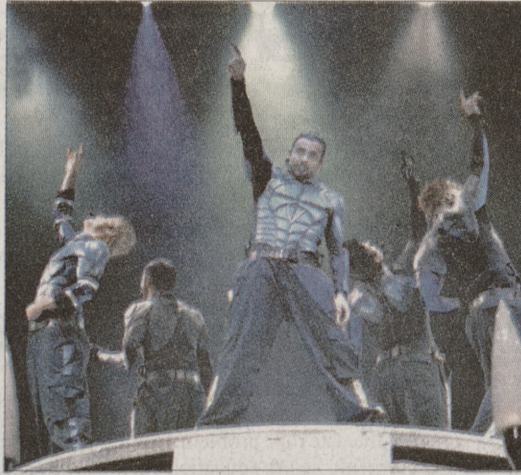
Johnson: But this has to do with self-segregation. We don't take the active role to try and go and meet people. Sometimes a black person sitting by themselves in the room is because they want to be left alone.

James: Usually, it is someone who is Hispanic or Asian that will come and sit beside me, but it is not someone of the white race.

Ogunbemi: Yeah, this is true, but then some of the Africans are afraid to sit beside the black Americans, because they are afraid that you will laugh at their accents.

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Backstreet's back, all right!



The Backstreet Boys, **AJ McLean, Nick Carter, Kevin Richardson, Howie Dorough** and **Brian Littrell**, perform in Houston at the Compaq Center Monday and Tuesday night. They are touring the U.S. to promote their *Millennium* album.

CODY WAGES/THE BATTALION

Prairie View coach mourns loss

Parents sue Ford

DALLAS (AP) — The parents of two of the four Prairie View A&M students killed in a van crash earlier this month have filed a defects lawsuit against the van's manufacturer, Ford Motor Co. In a lawsuit filed Monday in Marshall federal court, the families of Samuel Sturns and Jerome Jackson accuse Ford of design and marketing defects in its 15-passenger van, as well as breach of warranty for selling an allegedly defective vehicle.

"This is the fifth incident in two months where college kids have been seriously injured or killed in vehicles that they and their families trusted were safe," said Jay English, the lead attorney for the two families.

Ford spokeswoman Susan Krusel, who said she had not seen the lawsuit, would not comment Monday afternoon. However, she said the van model's rollover performance "is as good or better than peer vehicles in its class."

Attorneys for the Sturns and Jackson families claim Ford vans such as the one involved in the crash exhibits stability problems when heavily loaded.

PRAIRIE VIEW (AP) — For a while, 71-year-old Hoover Wright wondered why his life was spared and four of his Prairie View A&M athletes died when their van crashed en route to a track meet nearly three weeks ago.

Now he knows. Someone had to tell the team they had to put the tragedy behind them.

The Panthers followed their leader's words by defending successfully their Southwestern Athletic Conference indoor track championship Sunday in Baton Rouge, La.

Ron Nelson won the high jump and finished second in the long jump. Lewis Turner won the 55 meters and placed second in the 100 meters, and the Panthers easily outpointed runner-up Grambling State 132-101 1/2.

Broken ribs, a shoulder injury and numerous bumps and bruises suffered in the Feb. 10 accident couldn't dampen Wright's pride as he spoke of the team's victory while recuperating Tuesday at his home.

"I'm very proud of them," Wright said. "We asked them to look forward and to step up even though part of our team died and some got broken up like me. I didn't go to the meet but apparently they did a good job."

In addition to the four people killed, five athletes were injured. Those athletes, along with Wright, are recovering. None competed in the weekend indoor meet at Baton Rouge.

"I made the remark that what am I left here for unless it was to continue to try to inspire these young

people not only in track and field but in life in general," Wright said.

"My point of view to them was every time they get a chance to compete, they should give it their best because they don't know if a second or third chance will be available to them."

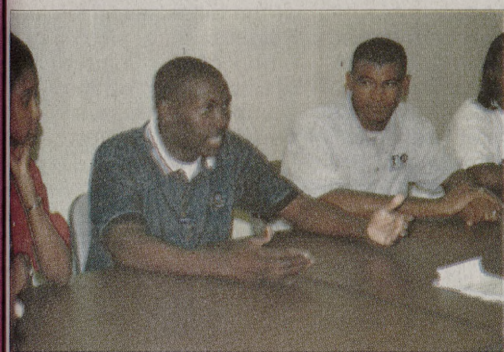
"... every time they get a chance to compete, they should give it their best because they don't know if a second or third chance will be available to them."

— Hoover Wright
Prairie View A&M track coach

Killed in the crash were Houston DeWayne Watson, 21, of Greenville, the driver; Jerome DeShaun Jackson, 21, of Dallas; Samuel Jason Sturns, 20, of Jasper; and Vernon Maurice James II, 18, of Vallejo, Calif.

"I was asleep when the accident started," Wright said. "Now I have an understanding of what it's like

See WRIGHT on Page 2.



ELIZABETH O'FARRELL/THE BATTALION

Tanir Uphaus (L), a senior health major, **Van Johnson**, a senior chemistry major (center) and **Preston Jenkins**, a junior management major, discuss racial issues at a round-table discussion.

Sales figures show jump in local business

STAFF AND WIRE
The Battalion

Texas A&M contributed \$766.5 million to the Bryan-College Station economy in 1999, almost \$68 million more than in 1998.

These figures are a result of an A&M in-house study requested by President Dr. Ray M. Bowen.

"Texas A&M continues to move forward in many meaningful ways that are highly beneficial to both the University and the Bryan-College Station community," Bowen said in a press release. "We are pleased to continue to make a positive contribution to the area's economy, and we are grateful for all the support that we receive locally."

According to the study, approximately \$191.9 million comes from A&M students. This is an increase of about \$4 million from 1998. An average \$4,418 per student was spent locally last year, with the majority going toward food, housing, clothing, school supplies and recreation.

The study also showed that visitors to A&M, including prospective students and families, accounted for \$62 million, an increase of \$8.9 million from 1998, and campus construction contracts totaled \$41.8 million, a drop of about \$1.9 million.

A&M's payroll exceeded the half-billion dollar mark for the first time last year, totaling \$513 million. Bowen said this amount is seen as a direct contribution

Local ECONOMIC IMPACT of University's Students

\$191.9 mil

- Typical A&M Student spent \$ 4,418 locally
- Major Categories for student expenditures:
 - food and housing
 - clothing
 - school supplies
 - recreation

RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

to the local economy because the money is presumed to be spent in the local community or deposited in local banking and thrift institutions.

The study also found the number of people attending athletic events, entertainment events, commencement exercises, continuing education programs and visitors to the George Bush Presidential Library Complex totaled 953,911.

This is an increase of 121,498 from '98, with gains of 89,000 more people attending Aggie football games and 81,362 more people attending Aggie baseball games.

The study attributed the large increase of baseball game attendees to A&M's hosting two NCAA regional tournaments.

Task force discusses transportation issues

BY KENNETH MACDONALD
The Battalion

To Student Body President Will Hurd, parking on campus is not a problem, it is a solution to a larger problem — getting people on and off campus.

Hurd spoke Tuesday at an open forum about the future of parking and transportation on campus sponsored by the Campus Access Task Force and MSC Current Issues Awareness.

The task force was formed in September 1998 to look for comprehensive solutions to the problems of a growing student population and transporting them around campus.

Hurd said the task force members are looking at ways to diversify the modes of transportation on campus, while limiting access to individual automobiles.

Some currently proposed suggestions include improving the Borrow-a-Bike system, expanding bicycle routes, increasing the effectiveness of the bus transit system and even installing a small scale monorail through campus.

Jonathan Smith, head of faculty senate planning committee and associate professor of geography, said he has heard many complaints from students about parking and transportation.

"All of this has convinced me that

universal satisfaction with the campus access system is probably impossible. Not everyone is going to be delighted all the time," Smith said. "The dissatisfaction with the system is sometimes not a problem with the system, but it is a problem with the people using the system."

The system of campus access has been in place since 1988, Smith said, and a common misconception is that the system is perfect, and it is the administrators who are mismanaging it.

"These are people who are doing a yeoman's service to operate a system that is badly outdated," Smith said.

Task Force member Sheryl Wine, executive director of PTTS, said that they plan to make more use of "hubs" that would be located on campus central to different modes of transportation.

As an example, Wine said the future West Campus parking would be one of these hubs.

"This is where they know they can park their car and find different modes of travel to get to where ever they need to go."

Students will find a bus stop like the one by Wehner, which Wine said is the most effective stop presently on campus. There would be a place for students to

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