

RED CROSSING the line

Red Cross should have donated majority of money to Sept. 11 victims

In the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, millions of Americans showed the true goodness of their nature by donating more than \$1 billion to various charitable organizations. Sadly, it now seems that more than a few of those charities were as interested in helping themselves to this treasure trove as they were helping the families of the victims. These are not small groups, either: one of the charities that has been called out on the carpet is none other than the American Red Cross.



MARK PASSWATERS

In its handling of the Liberty Fund, the Red Cross has disillusioned and infuriated many Americans who feel that their money is not being used in the way it was intended.

As of last week, the "Liberty Fund" had taken in more than \$64 million in donations. These donations were made by Americans looking to ensure that the families of the victims were taken care of now and in the future. Two months after the attacks, the Red Cross has dispersed \$121 million of that money to the victims and only another \$179 mil-

In its handling of the Liberty Fund, the Red Cross has disillusioned and infuriated many Americans who feel that their money is not being used in the way it was intended.

will follow. According to Bernadine Healy, the outgoing president of the American Red Cross, the remaining \$264 million—nearly 47 percent of this windfall of generosity—will be taken up by the Red Cross itself. Bill O'Reilly, host of Fox News' "The O'Reilly Factor," has gone so far as to claim that 80 percent of this money will not reach the families for which it was intended.

A Red Cross spokesman has said repeatedly that the organization "feels it has been true to

donor intent" with how the money has been managed. Somehow, the Red Cross has decided that "donor intent" means Liberty Fund money can go toward anthrax victims, a \$50-million program to build blood inventories and a donation of \$14.7 million for community outreach. The remaining \$200 million, in the meantime, will remain in the bank, collecting interest for the Red Cross.

Healy and other Red Cross leaders said, according to *The Washington Post*, "Their messages to local chapters and their public appeals made clear to donors that money would be used for family needs after the Sept. 11 attacks, and for its 'aftermath' and 'emerging' needs." Most people would have considered that to mean the "aftermath" and "emerging needs" of the widows, widowers and orphans of Sept. 11, not the Red Cross. They certainly would not have

approved of the Red Cross hoarding money toward a fund they claim is for victims of a second attack that may never come.

It is disappointing to see that the Red Cross is looking at such a humanitarian disaster as a big payday, but it would not be the first time that they have shown a lack of appreciation for people who raised money on their behalf. This summer, Texas A&M students set up the Chad Garren Memorial Flood Relief Fund that was intended to help raise money for the victims of Tropical Storm Allison. The storm, which ravaged Houston in June, killed 17 people, including a member of the A&M Class of 2001.

Instead of helping the novice students with their efforts, the Red Cross refused to return phone calls, would not guarantee that the money raised would go to the victims of Tropical Storm Allison, declined to help with public relations efforts—in spite of having a paid staff on hand to do so—and refused to assist the students in obtaining not-for-profit status from the IRS. Red Cross officials were, however, able to attend the Aug. 16 event to ask when they would be receiving their check.

The Red Cross has done many great things for people in need for more than 100 years. Their actions of this summer, and more importantly now, might cause one to wonder if they have decided that their good deeds now

extend to themselves. If true, this would be a tragic disaster in its own right.

For the sake of many people, let us all hope that the Red Cross places the needs of others before the needs of itself.

Mark Passwaters is a senior political science major.



CHAD MALLAM • THE BATTALION

Rent-a-Center falsely accused

Big business forever has been an easy target for people looking to scam those more fortunate than themselves with needless lawsuits. In today's increasingly politically correct workplace, this trend only is getting worse. In most of these cases, the facts are rendered irrelevant because this country's judicial system feels continually obligated to rule in favor of the struggling "little man."

Plano, Texas-based Rent-A-Center, the nation's largest rent-to-own chain, has fallen prey to many such frivolous lawsuits, the most recent of which resulted in a \$12.3 million out-of-court settlement with 4,600 female employees. Interestingly enough, only nineteen of these female employees actually filed the suit. The other 4,581 apparently joined in when they saw that there was money to be made. Rent-A-Center has denied any wrongdoing.

Because the company has either settled or lost questionable lawsuits in the past, ranging from racial discrimination to unfair hiring practices, these ladies clearly thought that they could cash in with a sex-discrimination suit. They were right. The \$12.3 million settlement that was reached could have been even worse had the case gone to trial. No jury wants to rule against 4,600 "helpless" women, regardless of the evidence presented.

But it was these women's own physical and mental limitations, not company policy or poor management, that held them back and interfered with their performance at work. The

And a good look at these ladies' comical list of grievances shows that this lawsuit is just that—a ripoff.

rent-to-own giant should not have been forced to cough up a dime.

Admittedly, rent-to-own companies do have their problems. They are not traditionally known for their leniency or generosity. But they generally stick to overcharging their customers; customers who know exactly what they are getting into when they walk through the front door.

But perhaps Rent-A-Center taught a few of its female employees a little too well because the students have started ripping off their teacher. And a good look at these ladies' comical list of grievances shows that this lawsuit is just that—a ripoff.

Some of these women claim that they were discouraged from applying or simply not hired by Rent-A-Center. Half of the company's workforce is composed of women, many of whom are happily employed. The management did not put "we don't hire women" on job applications. People are quick to cry "discrimination" when they are not hired instead of considering the fact that they may not have been qualified for the job they were seeking.

These ladies also claim that Rent-A-Center's weight-lifting requirements for employees were simply "too heavy." But if someone cannot meet the demands of the job description, it should come as no surprise to them when they lose that job, regardless of their sex. If a female employee cannot lift a television or appliance, she obviously has no business working at Rent-A-Center. After all, it is not like she was asked to juggle this stuff. All of the company's employees were given adequate tools and training to meet their job's demands.

Rent-A-Center was even willing to allow most of these limp-armed ladies to continue working, taking less physically taxing jobs such as cleaning or doing clerical work. Though this may have been all some of these women were qualified for, it came as a slap in the face because they considered themselves above sweeping or typing.

It was only out of sheer fear of harsher monetary penalties that Rent-A-Center settled with these women. With a poor track record that would have meant certain doom in court, the company had its back against the wall. It is unfortunate that senseless lawsuits like this ever get off the ground.

George Deutsch is a junior journalism major.

EDITORIAL

Texas A&M University — Celebrating 125 Years

THE BATTALION

SERVING THE TEXAS A&M COMMUNITY SINCE 1940

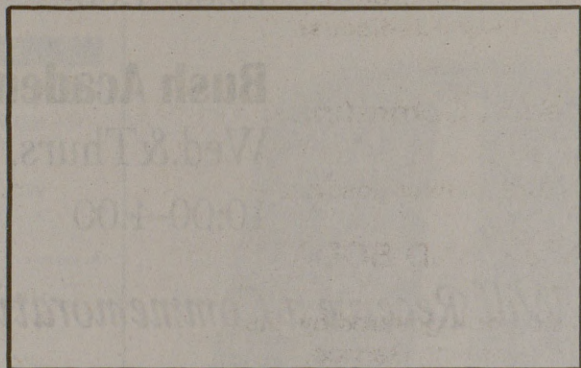
EDITORIAL BOARD

BRADY CREEL	Editor in Chief
MARIANO CASTILLO	Managing Editor
CAYLA CARR	Opinion Editor
JONATHAN JONES	Opinion Editor
ROLANDO GARCIA	News Editor

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE UNCARTOON

Texas A&M's perfect political cartoon would be one by which no one is disturbed, no thought is provoked and no humor is found—a true Uncartoon.

CARTOON OF THE DAY



© THE UNCARTOONIST

MAIL CALL

Honorary mascots

In response to Brieanne Porter's Nov. 13 column:

Although there may be people who are offended by the use of Native American names for their high school mascots, it should be taken as an honor rather than a slander. There are many mascot names out there that represent a group of people: Dallas Cowboys, University of Louisiana Ragin Cajun's and the New York Yankees.

I am a graduate of Port Neches-Groves (PN-G) High School that has the mascot "Indians." PN-G is a high school that is very dedicated to tradition, just like Texas A&M. In the early 1970's, the Cherokee Nation gave a seal of approval to the PN-G Independent School District for use of "Indian" for its mascot.

Would they have given the seal of approval if it was so offensive? I believe that my high school honors Native Americans by sustaining pride and the tradition of excellence within the school district.

Coming from a high school so conservative in tradition, I find it very hard to believe PN-G would ever give up its mascot name. It is the equivalent of someone forcing Texas A&M to change its mascot. We all know that would never happen.

Ever since I have been here at A&M, I have learned that there are a lot of people who don't feel

strong about their high school traditions. It might be easy for a person like that to agree to change their high school mascot. But when you are very dedicated to tradition, like so many Aggies here at A&M, you will put up a fight and never give up. I believe my high school will never give up its mascot name for as long as it exists.

Brandon Hanks
Class of 2000

A sign of maturity

In response to Richard Bray's Nov. 12 column:

The recent opinion from the RHA concerning the wording of the fight song is a welcome sign of maturity. After almost 40 years on the campus, I am convinced that constantly looking over our shoulder at Austin seriously inhibits our ability to look ahead to our own future. The second verse two should be reserved for games where the university in Austin is our opponent.

Today's letter from Mr. Williamson also flies in the face of history. Unless he is from the Class of 1902 he will graduate from a university not a college. Believe me, he should be grateful!

David G. Woodcock
professor of architecture