

EDITORIAL

LOOKING PAST TOP 20

A controversial plan aimed at increasing campus diversity is dead for now, and rightfully so. A more diverse student body is a necessary and worthy goal, vital to fulfilling Vision 2020, but the top 20 plan was overly politicized and poorly timed. It also contained hints of racial preference. As such, the plan probably would have been declared illegal, a violation of the 1996 Hopwood decision that barred using race as a factor in admissions and financial aid in Texas higher education. Even if the top 20 plan was declared legal, it violates a higher principle of color-blindness in education. And now that University officials have ended its consideration for the time being, the focus should remain on diversity, but the approach should change.

The plan would automatically admit qualified students in the top 20 percent of certain economically disadvantaged schools. The vast majority of the targeted schools are from districts with large Hispanic and African-American student populations. Many students raised concerns about the specifics of the plan, and the Student Senate condemned it last month. At the root of the effort to enroll more minority students to A&M should be a focus on first generation access in college, and A&M in particular. Here is where new ideas, free from charges of racial quotas and preferences, must come in.

The goal of increasing minority admission must not end with the top 20 plan. Persuasive arguments of racial preference meant the plan was a hot political issue, and the timing certainly could have been better. Election season is in full swing, and Attorney General John Cornyn, who is running for the U. S. Senate, has not issued an opinion on the matter as requested by the Texas A&M System Board of Regents. University officials should avoid well-intentioned, but volatile and legally questionable, courses of action like the top 20 plan. They only serve to mobilize current and former students, as well as activists on both sides of the issue, in a way not constructive to the University.

Perhaps the best way to encourage minority applicants is to meet those students where they are. There are many qualified students in the high schools targeted by the top 20 plan who would do very well at A&M. But schools and students should not be favored for guaranteed admission over others. Sending current minority students into the targeted high schools, alongside recruiters from other schools, is a good start. Then, prospective students can begin to learn for themselves why Aggieland is a special and welcoming place.

THE BATTALION

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MAIL CALL

Diversity issues creates a stir

In response to March 4 Diversity Columns:

While both articles presented on diversity were well-written and perceptive, neither was well grounded in reality. The reality of diversity is that a University will reflect the prejudices and values of the student body. Texas A&M is a primarily conservative University and therefore attracts primarily conservative students. Yes, there are many different views on politics and religion that are espoused by our student body, but these are a minority, and are represented as such.

While the admissions people should strive to equate the student body with the demographics of Texas, the true choice lies in whether this University is attractive to the proposed students or not. This is not to say, however, that different views in the University should be in anyway suppressed or overlooked, or that we should not strive to attract a more diverse student body. Being aware of the differences around you and trying to understand those differences is what makes us better people. As Bedsole said, the focus should "shift to solving the problems of diversity. Rather than blaming or complaining about them." The problem with diversity is that many of us are not willing to accept those around us and respect and explore the differences between us all. Hopefully, as the University grows and the student body changes, we will be able to diversify ourselves, and then better reflect the beautiful patchwork that is the population of Texas.

Jennifer D'Abadie
Class of 2005

Ruby Lee's claim that Texas A&M is "not friendly to all" is vague and lacks substance. She implicitly argues for two things: racial quotas and the creation of an Asian studies-oriented curriculum as a solution to A&M's lack of racial diversity and supposed intolerant, racist atmosphere.

Her first plan of action, to deliberately limit the number of whites while accepting students only because they belong to a minority race, is a recipe for disaster. Just ask the University of California's administrators, who recently abandoned racial quotas because of the unfairness and subsequent resentment the quotas created. Her second plan, to introduce Asian studies, is puzzling. Texas as a whole is hardly a mecca of Asian culture. There are plenty of schools in the nation that specialize in Asian-related subjects.

If A&M actually did feel the need to further encourage foreign studies, the introduction of Mexican/Latin American studies makes much more sense based on this region's history and current ethnic make up.

A&M has the right to be different. A&M has the right to select the best of applicants to attend, even if most of those applicants are primarily conservative, white Texans, who are drawn to this school's culture, and who neither embrace liberal policies nor have aspirations to dedicate their lives to studying Asia. Lee has unfairly characterized Aggies as ignorant and racist because of who they are; but in fact, they are some of the friendliest, most hospitable and brightest students in the state.

Phillip Salzman
Graduate Student

Costly promises

Proposal gives more welfare money to married women



MELISSA FRIED

The single welfare mother's story is not original. They are often young and unmarried, left to bring up their children and play both the role of mother and father. These women work long hours and are barely able to make ends meet with a gross income of under \$9,000. Their families depend on welfare, but an enlightened President Bush believes he has the ultimate answer to these mother's woes — \$100 million in experimental government programs to promote marriage among single welfare mothers in an effort to decrease the number of welfare recipients.

Marriage is a valuable institution, but is it really worth the hefty price tag of at least \$100 million? Regardless of the vital role that marriage and traditional family values play within the Bush administration, to force the idea of marriage is to take a step back almost 40 years and make the bold assertion that a single woman is incapable of raising a child. To force the idea of marriage is to support a marriage of convenience rather than a marriage of love. To force the idea of marriage does nothing more than cheapen the sanctity of an institution that is considered to be an intrinsic part of our society.

By assuming marriage is the answer to the single welfare mother's problem, we only further antagonize the situation. Marriage alone cannot solve financial problems. Even if these mothers were to marry, how can we assume that the men they marry, or are forced to marry, will have the financial means to support them and their children? From a sociological perspective, people naturally associate with others within their same social class or rank. It can be assumed that the type of men these women associate with do not earn six figures, but perhaps they hold steady jobs and treat their wives and their families with respect.

Unfortunately, the combined income would still place them at the poverty level in need of more governmental assistance, but in President Bush's opinion it is the marriage that counts.

Or as a recent article from *The Christian Science Monitor* hypothesizes, being forced into a marriage could possibly increase the number of spousal abuses, especially if the relationship was rocky to begin with. It is

certainly admirable for a man to realize his responsibility to a child he has fathered, but it is certainly not in the woman's best interest to be married to a man who beats her. Divorce appears to be the best option out of a situation such as this, but that could potentially place the woman and her family right back on welfare; thus she remains married and endures a lifetime of mental and physical trauma.

Bush's heart is in the right place in wanting to help single welfare mothers. But rather than squander \$100 million into programs that almost push women into marriage, he should consider using that money to create a number of experimental government programs that accomplish the primary objective of his legislation — programs that would help single welfare mothers help themselves.

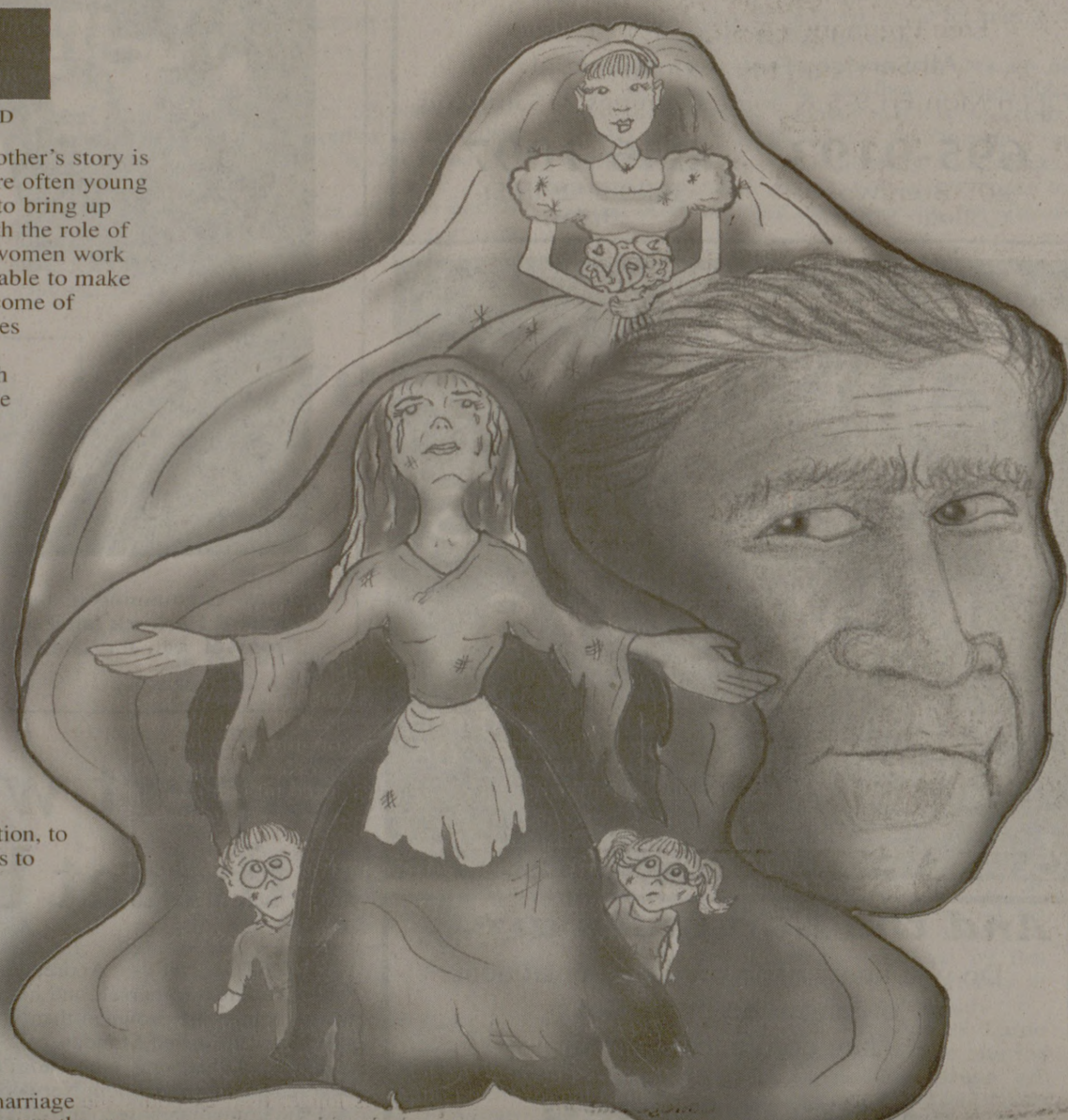
Single welfare mothers need, first and foremost, access to affordable and reliable childcare. There are some women who have no jobs and are not able to seek employment because there is no one to take care of their children. By instituting

affordable childcare, perhaps by even subsidized one of the new experimental government programs, these women will be freed from their tie to the house and allowed the mobility to look for a job.

The childcare initiative also opens doorways for those women who not only wish to search for a job, but also want to be skilled so they can do much more than janitorial or restaurant food service work. Job and vocational training are time consuming, but can be rewarding in the end. With a safe place to send their children, mothers can devote their attention to these training seminars. They will leave with the tools and knowledge of a certain trade or job and will be able to effectively and confidently tackle the fierce and competitive job market.

Marriage should not be exploited for the sake of alleviating financial problems. Single welfare mothers need help. Maybe someday Bush will have a real answer.

Melissa Fried is a freshman international studies major.



ANGELIQUE FORD • THE BATTALION

Animal fat as fuel alternative



ANDI BACA

In the search for an alternative fuel source, the answer lies in an unlikely source: animal fat. According to Yahoo! News, the University of Georgia has been using chicken fat to heat buildings and water on its campus. Energy News reports in a similar project, that Swift and Company began burning animal fat as fuel in December 2000.

Animal fat fuels are produced as waste in the slaughtering and fabrication process of livestock and poultry. The overabundant animal fat is processed so it can be burned as fuel. With an increasing need to find alternatives for depleting natural resources, burning animal fat as fuel is an ideal solution.

The initial attraction to burning animal fuel is the

cost. Yahoo News reported that officials say it is cheaper to use animal fat fuels than coal or oil. Animal fat has not been included in the constant price increase. The demand for animal fat is tremendously lower than coal or oil, keeping costs down. Proving to be a safe fuel, officials also report that animal fat burns as clean as natural gas.

ment for oil and coal.

President Bush is responsible for implementing a new energy plan. The current energy plan under the Bush administration calls for alternative sources of fuel to fulfill at least 20 percent of energy needs within two decades. Animal fat is an ideal alternative fuel because of its abundance.

With an increasing need to find alternatives for depleting natural resources, burning animal fat as fuel is an idea solution.

Burning animal fat is safer for people and the environment versus coal and oil. The emissions produced from burning the fat are low in sulfur and other pollutants. However, animal fat fuels still are capable of producing the same British thermal unit value of oil fuels. Environmentally and productively, animal fat poses no threat of failing as a replace-

The United States produces 11 billion pounds of fat a year from poultry, beef and pork. Animal fat is processed in the United States, eliminating our dependency on other countries for fuel. Unlike the limited supply of coal and oil, animal fat is a stable resource that will be available for the future. The switch to using ani-

mal fat, or any alternative fuel, may not be an easy one. Equipment will have to be converted or replaced to use the new fuel. Yahoo News added that the University of Georgia spent \$30,000 to convert one of the school's steam boilers to be able to burn animal fat. Many universities and companies do not have the means to convert or replace a perfectly efficient coal-burning heat system. They, in fact, may not want to deal with the hassle of switching over to a new fuel burning process. Despite the initial set up costs, in the long run animal fat fuels will prove to be a more economical fuel.

Animal fat is an ideal solution for a breakthrough fuel. However, the possibilities are not limited to just heating buildings and water. Other projects are underway, including the potential use of animal fat as fuel for automobiles.

Andi Baca is a senior journalism major.