

EDITORIAL GET INVOLVED

This week's student elections highlight a growing lack of faith many Aggies have in their student government. While voter turnout is always an issue, this year there are signs of a deeper disenchantment. The overall number of candidates is unusually low — only two student body president candidates, a significant number of class officers running unopposed and there are many Student Senate positions no one filed for. It seems a turbulent semester where the campus was the center of attention regarding its top 20 plan, diversity issues, Bonfire and fee increases, has left the student body with a depleted hope in effective representation.

Today and Thursday, students can send a message that this must change. High turnout, followed by an active vocalization of their opinion on the issues that directly affect them, is a positive beginning.

Students may feel they cannot do anything when an issue arises. This, of course, is not true. Ideally, elected campus officials provide the means of student input to administrators. If little effort is made to gather opinion, Aggies raising their voices can still initiate change, such as last semester with the Residence Hall Association flag controversy. Now, more than ever, the student body needs motivated, hard-working leaders in its senate, executive and legislative branches of government.

The vacancies or unopposed candidates on the ballot this week reflects the type of indifference that creates little or no accountability for student voices on the most important decisions. This adds to the disenfranchisement of Aggies.

In the Jan. 22 Battalion, Student Body President Schuyler Houser said no survey of student opinion was conducted on a large fee increase. In fact, she and the Student Senate supported the increase with very little input from students. Maybe most Aggies supported the new fees. But the lack of involvement from students, in marked contrast to the uproar that ensued at the University of Texas over a smaller fee increase, meant that a significant change was made affecting students without their input. Something needs to change, both in Student Government and among students.

Student government can always be improved. Get involved and vote this week. At the very least, a student voice will be heard on the issues that affect the lives of current and future Aggies.

AMERICAN PROUD?

Patriotism has lost its importance



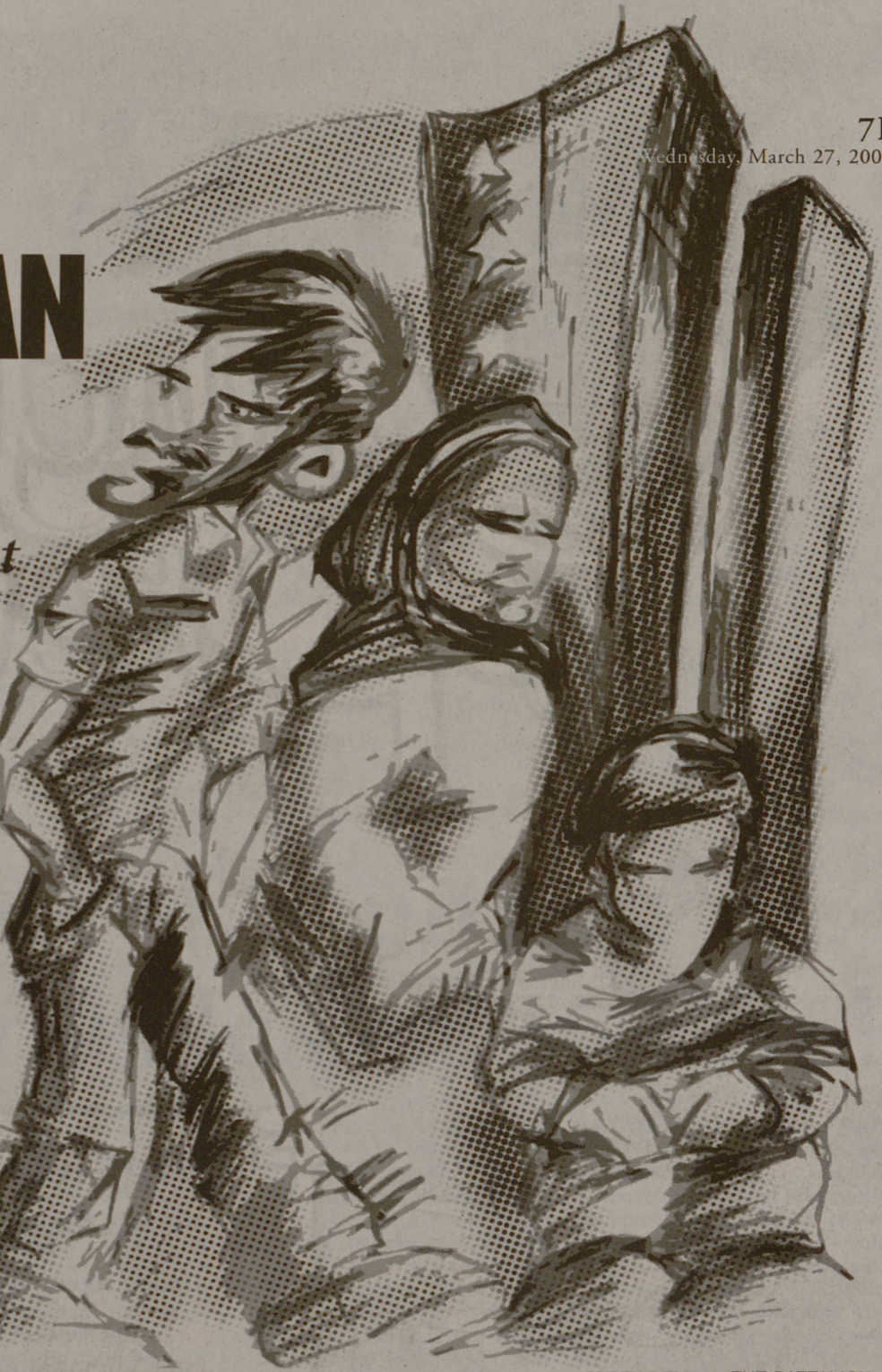
COURTNEY WALSH

In the wake of public complaints by U.S. and non-U.S. citizens alleging discrimination, racial profiling, background checks and job termination in armed forces and airport security since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, Americans have been called upon to review what being an American means, especially in terms of American citizenship. Some might say lost jobs are an indirect attempt at revenge or personal remediation for the terrorist attacks, similar to the acts carried out against Japanese-Americans and immigrants after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Without making justification for such behavior, somewhere the line must be drawn and boundaries set to ensure all Americans are as safe as possible.

Random termination is not a proper way to address public concerns and fears; however, the U.S. government does nothing "at random" when it comes to matters of national security and sacrifices are necessary.

Additionally, the majority of those experiencing duress are not Americans, but long-standing immigrants without a commitment to the United States. The government would be ignorant if it were not concerned with this matter, especially since the terrorist hijackers fit this profile. Also, there has been no real outcry on the part of the Arab or Muslim communities condemning Osama bin Laden's activities and his terrorism campaign against the United States, which can only lead the American public to speculate why this is so. Due to the lack of voiced opposition to bin Laden and voiced allegiance to America, it seems that perhaps some members of the American community are here for a piece of the American dream without giving anything in return.

And it is for this reason that the issue of American citizenship goes much deeper than the recent attention it has been given. People seem to forget there is an exchange that occurs between an immigrant and America if he truly wishes to be here. By becoming a citizen of this country, one symbolically pledges his loyalty to the United States. This in no way means he forgets his cultural background, but it



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does mean he assumes a level of personal commitment and self-sacrifice as his American duty — at least it should mean this. However, many Americans have taken their country for granted for

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so long that it only makes sense for immigrants to emulate this behavior. One group in particular that serves as a prime example of such a scenario is the American Civil Liberties Union. While this organization does much good, it has become a detriment to the legitimacy of certain civil liberties because it has neglected to acknowledge that unless a person is an American citizen, he is protected by his country of origin's embassy until his naturalization. If the ACLU is willing to fight for an immigrant as if he were a citizen, providing him with multilingual brochures, community outreach and other various systems of support, why should he bother to become a citizen? If anything, organizations such as

the ACLU sever any thread of commonality between the ethnic groups that makeup America. The symbolism behind the phrase "American melting pot" is that America, from the very beginning, has been a conglomeration of nationalities merged into one unifying body; if there is division and self-segregation, there is no unification.

When one accepts all that America has to offer, giving oneself in the form of U.S. citizenship does not seem like too much to ask for in return. Granted, unfair practices do occur, but America is not perfect and those in search of such idealism are disillusioned.

Today, in an America consumed by political correctness, if one finds what he deems to be a flaw in the system — no matter how well-founded or ludicrous the complaint — he fusses like a spoiled child until someone appeases him. How quickly forgotten is the fact that America, with all of her faults and flaws, is still a beacon, a land of refuge and freedom and one of the greatest nations on earth. America is well worth pledging allegiance to.

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THE BATTALION

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MIKE WUKOVICH

MAIL CALL

Diversity for all

Once again campaign season is upon us, and we, as Aggies, are inundated with flyers and demands by candidates, hoping to win our vote. Today, however, I see campaigners for Sampson Jordan beating a drum in a mock war beat, wearing a cheap headband, and mocking Native American culture.

What this has to do with being a senior yell leader, I have no idea. As a member of the Ogalala Lakota nation, I was greatly offended. At a university striving to be more diverse, these actions have no place. I have no doubt that had the campaigners been wearing cheap imitation African robes and sporting cheap crude African masks, the African-American population on campus might even have Jesse Jackson himself flying down here to rally his troops. The Native peoples of this country have suffered the same atrocities as have the Africans imported here for slavery, not more, but we are not bombarded with their struggle or reparations. The proud people whom the Anglos stole land from, slaughtering and whose culture they attempted to completely wipe from the face of the Earth deserves better treatment than that.

I for one would not support any candidate who would find this injustice funny, and I would hope that neither would my fellow Aggies. Jordan, you have just lost my vote.

John Kitsopoulos
Class of 2001

No accommodations?

In response to George Deutsch's March 27 column:

Deutsch said to grant special treatment for some students and not others, even if the students are deemed disabled, is unfair. Should we not let students with mental retardation use graphic organizers, or blind students use braille materials or dyslexic students, read small print without assistive technology or deaf students sit at the back of the classroom without an interpreter? These are all examples of accommodations. Should we put all of these people with disabilities that affect academic performance in a segregated classroom and label them? All of these people are protected by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Mandy Herrera
Class of 2003

Education, not abstinence

No-sex campaign will weaken students' sexual awareness



DRU COLLINS

The Center for AIDS Prevention Studies reported that although more than 93 percent of public high schools offer courses on sexuality, controversy over what message should be given has rendered them ineffective. The study also pointed out that the United States has more than twice the teenage pregnancy rate of any Western industrialized country.

More than one million teenagers become pregnant annually. HIV infection is increasing among young people. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the age range that reports the most new cases is between 13 and 24 years old. This is a direct reflection of the current push to keep sex and sexuality private and

avoid informing young adults about their bodies and sex in high school.

In fact, there is a movement in the U.S. Congress to only award grants to school programs that teach abstinence as the only form of safe sex. President George W. Bush and other conservatives argue that "abstinence only" sex education is the only education that does not condone sex. This is a big mistake.

Rather than teaching students to avoid sex, emphasis should be geared toward educating students about sex and its consequences. Americans in the 1950s tried to keep their children from engaging in premarital sex by telling children fairytales and old wives' tales that left abstinence as the only alternative.

Margaret Griffith, director of health education at A.P. Beutel Health Center, said the 1950s attitude has reappeared. Some parents and teachers tell children that sex is dirty, but they also say do it with

someone you love. Griffith said "this message is obviously conflicting and confusing; kids should avoid sex because it is dirty or immoral but are told that it is a gift to be shared with someone you love but only after marriage."

It is no wonder that when some children mature to the college age the curiosity of sex takes over. With parents often miles away, college students are the most explorative in terms of sex. Yet, because most of those who are sexually active are uninformed or ill informed, there are often severe consequences.

Earlier this year, Karen Marie Hubbard, a college student from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, died after giving birth in a residence hall bathroom. She was 19 years old and a freshman at the university. She was co-valedictorian of her high school and a member of the National Honor Society, math team, Spanish club, school band, athletics and student council.

Her high school guidance counselor described her as "one of the nicest people you would ever meet, and the person that you would say was definitely going to make it." Hubbard's roommate said Hubbard ignored concerns from her friends and may not have known she was pregnant. The ignorance that led to her death could have been avoided if high schools placed more emphasis on educating students about sex.

These incidents prove that sex education programs need to focus on more than abstinence. As they always have, children will find a way to do what they want. It is better that educators inform them about the risks and options and teach children to embrace their sexuality rather than suppress it. The wise man is much more equipped to make a responsible decision than the ignorant fool.

Dru Collins is a senior speech communications major.