

## EDITORIAL

### AGGIES UNITED

#### Students must not forget

The Aggie Bonfire stack collapsed four years ago, killing 12 students and injuring 27. Along with it, a 90-year tradition of the Aggie Spirit toppled into the dirt of the Polo Fields, holding hostage the fate of what those who sacrificed the night of Nov. 18, 1999, were working so hard for. Once the silent spell cast by the loss and hurt of the day broke, Texas A&M became a divided campus. Those who wanted to carry on the spirit of Bonfire squared off against those afraid another Bonfire could never be safe, including the A&M administration.

The debate will continue until off-campus fires die out or the University builds its own revamped version of the fire overseen by professionals. But underneath that debate, the students working hard to keep the tradition ignited and those who shrug off talk about Bonfire have a common ground: Their love for their school.

A&M is about more than a Bonfire that may or may not continue to burn and will always be a part of the tradition and lore of Aggieland. The students, the people who work hard each day to learn and love and share with others, create and uphold the values Aggies cherish. Remember the Aggie family's loss and, in so doing, remember that each student, faculty and staff member is a part of the family. Celebrate what you find in each day at A&M.

Those killed and injured four years ago today were working on something they felt passionate about. And that is the most important lesson that Aggies should remember today: Pursue life with passion.

## THE BATTALION

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The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 200 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number. The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters also may be mailed to: 014 Reed McDonald, MS 1111, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Fax: (979) 845-2647 Email: mailcall@thebattalion.net

### MAIL CALL

#### Immigrants should cross legally

In response to a Nov. 7 mail call:

My family came to Texas more than 150 years ago; and they did it legally. The laws as they are today deem it illegal for people to come to America and live without permission.

If illegal immigrants want a better future for their children, they should be the ones taking proper initiative to do so — not the American taxpayer. But I don't go out and do something illegal just because I want my life to be better. I work for it, I put in the time and effort that is necessary for it to happen the right way. I pay my taxes, I abide by the laws of the state and nation, so that I, and other Americans, can receive the benefits of doing so.

I intend no disregard toward any ethnicity or nationality; if you are doing something illegal you are slowly destroying that American dream for the legal residents, who are the ones footing the bill making that American dream possible. Why should illegal immigrants be able to reap the benefits of the "American" way that is being provided by legal residents who are com-

plying with the laws that help keep this country so great?

Dustin Pratho  
Class of 2003

#### Parents must teach both sides

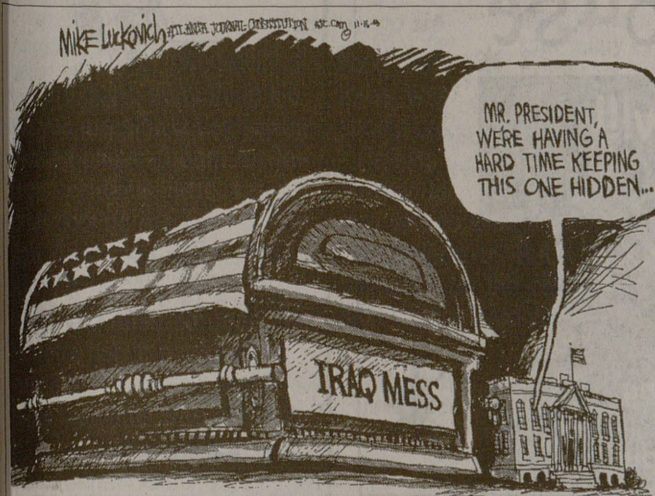
In response to a Nov. 13 mail call:

No matter what moral stances parents may take, they have a right to teach those morals to their children. I also believe that parents have a responsibility to explain differing opinions and why the parents have chosen their opinion. This allows children the right to determine their own beliefs as they grow.

However, using young, uninformed children to help protest an idea is irresponsible. Has the child been provided access to all the different, unbiased sides of the idea? Is the child able to answer difficult questions from someone two or three times their age? They should be in school learning.

Parents should teach their children to question the status quo, and to stand up for what they believe in. But it should ultimately be the child's decision, not the parents.

Sarah Solis  
Class of 2004



# The price of beauty

## Contestant's victory perpetuates a long-term loss

Miss Afghanistan, Vida Samadzai, has been criticized in her home country for appearing scantily clad in a red bikini during the Miss Earth Contest. The Afghan Supreme Court condemned her for displaying her body in a way that is against Islamic law, against Islam and against the culture of the Afghan people, as reported by state TV in Kabul. However, Samadzai, who has studied in America since 1996 and is currently enrolled at California State University, is victimized not only by Afghan oppression, but also by American pressure for conformity at the other end of the modesty-promiscuity spectrum.



LINDSAY ORMAN

While Americans may celebrate her liberation from the tyrannical restrictions of a culture that marginalizes women, a photo of the beauty queen on CNN.com — in which her ribs can literally be seen protruding from her side — suggests that her liberation is no more than adherence to ridiculous standards of emaciated and exposed beauty so widespread in the United States.

The opportunity to plead the plight of Afghan women and children to a worldwide audience is available at an odd price — the sight of Samadzai's bare stomach. The Miss Earth contest requires all contestants to take the stage in a two-piece swimsuit; and Samadzai, eager for a chance to air her plea, agreed to let her participation fly in the face of all the traditional modesty that marks her culture. She admitted, though, that she felt uncomfortable in the revealing bikini, according to The Associated Press.

Samadzai, the first to represent Afghanistan in 30 years, justified her decision when she told the AP that the Miss Earth Contest "gives me a chance to speak up and send my voice out there and let people know that the Afghans are in great need of help." She was even recognized with the pageant's Beauty for a Cause award, which was introduced this year.

Judges chose Samadzai for the prize as a symbol of the newfound confidence, courage and spirit of today's women, according to the AP. But the world is too busy staring at that little swimsuit to notice that she also supposedly represents a victory of women's rights and various social, personal and religious struggles, as the judges noted.

A victory of women's rights? Most women would not cite an uncomfortable instance of bikini modeling — used as a means of achieving a higher goal — as a victory for women's rights. Rather it's



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another example of the way in which this Hollywood culture objectifies women and encourages the use of sex appeal to get ahead in the world.

The message sent by the Miss Earth competition is that only women willing to bare most of their bodies — extremely thin, anorexic-looking bodies — can be beauty queens. Despite her discomfort at appearing in the two-piece, Samadzai viewed the pageant as a "celebration of freedom, a message that Afghan women no longer must cower in submission," according to Newsday. However, in the excitement of losing her burka, she may not have noticed that she is hardly standing in triumph. Rather she is being attacked by some of the women she seeks to help.

Many politically active Afghan women admonish Samadzai, sharing the sentiments of Sima Wali, who believes that she is providing an argument for the extrem-

ists to sideline women and women's imaginations. The president of Afghanistan's Refugee Women in Development said Samadzai's pageant notoriety "becomes a powerful excuse for those who want to keep (women) from winning power."

Unfortunately, Samadzai's cause seems to be drowning in the controversy swirling around her provocative swimwear. If Miss Afghanistan has failed to send her voice out there, she has certainly succeeded in getting her red bikini into the spotlight. Surely there must be better ways for women to change the world than by parading around half-naked, hoping that their high heels and tiny bodies in still tinier swimsuits are a step toward remedying such ills as the female oppression they ironically perpetuate by subscribing to such notions.

Lindsay Orman is a senior English major.

# Removal reinforces Constitution

The Alabama Court of the Judiciary removed Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore from office



JENELLE WILSON

Thursday after it found that Moore had violated the Canons of Judicial Ethics in defying a court order to remove a 5,300-pound Ten Commandments statue from the rotunda of the state Judicial Building. Moore had been suspended from the bench on Aug. 22, after the state Judicial Inquiry Commission, a panel created by the state Constitution to act as a grand jury when allegations arise against the judiciary, filed a formal complaint against Moore. The monument was moved out of sight on Aug. 27.

While the decision to remove Moore from the bench may have angered Moore's supporters, it was the only option the Court of the Judiciary had, and the panel should be commended for making what was, in reality, a courageous — and unpopular — decision. Moore took an oath of office requiring him to "faithfully and honestly discharge the duties" of his office and to uphold the Constitution of the United States and of the state of Alabama. He failed to do so by defying the order to remove the statue.

A man with such little respect for the rule of law should not have the job of interpreting it.

The Judicial Inquiry Commission charged Moore with six violations of the Canons of Judicial Ethics, including failure to uphold the integrity and independence of the judicial system and failure to

uphold a respect for the law. During his testimony, according to the Los Angeles Times, Moore said his acknowledgment of God "cannot be a violation of the Canons of Ethics. Without God there can be no ethics." However, this acknowledgment was not made by just verbally expressing his opinion; it was made by secretly putting a 2 1/2-ton granite statue in the State Judicial Building, where everyone entering the building would be forced to view it.

His acknowledgment was using his power as the state's top judge to force his beliefs onto others.

However, Moore's case is no longer about whether a massive statue of the Ten Commandments qualifies as an establishment of religion; it's about whether he did what he was required to do as a judge, an upholder of the law, and the answer is a clear and resounding no.

Federal courts ruled that the monument violated the U.S. Constitution and needed to be removed. Moore had his appeal; he lost. He asked the U.S. Supreme Court to hear his case; he was denied certiorari on Nov. 3. The Supreme Court let the lower court opinion stand.

Moore was obligated by his oath to support this decision, whether he agreed or not. Moore, however, did not support the decision; therefore, he violated what he promised to uphold and he frequently said he would do it again if given the chance.

Unfortunately, the panel did not have the power to bar him from running for the office of chief justice again.

Moore said removing the statue "would have violated my conscience, violated my oath of office and violated every rule of law I had sworn to uphold," according to The Associated Press. One has to wonder exactly which laws Moore is talking about, though, because the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution is clear in prohibiting his behavior, as is Article 1, section 3 of the Alabama Constitution, which prohibits the state

from giving preferences to one religion over others. As a judge, Moore cannot make up his own rules, he has to follow the ones laid out for him.

The reasons for Moore's removal from office are clear. He was required by his office to respect the law and decisions from federal court interpreting the law. Once the federal appeals court,

which interprets U.S. constitutional issues, handed down its decision that the monument violated the First Amendment, he had to follow it. No one asked him to deny his God, only to remove a monument from a building, which he publicly refused to do. For the court system to run effectively, government officials have to obey even the orders they dislike; Moore didn't, and now he has to face the consequences of his decision.

Jenelle Wilson is a senior political science major.

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