

## Starving for attention

Industrialized countries not effectively decreasing hunger in developing nations

In June 2002, at the World Food Summit, 182 countries, including the United States, signed an anti-hunger declaration. The pledge renewed commitment to plans set forth in November 1996 at the World Food Summit to reduce the number of hungry people in the world by half by 2015. In 1996, more than 830 million people were estimated to be chronically malnourished worldwide; to meet the reduction goal, the number of hungry people would have to be reduced by more than 20 million per year.



JENELLE WILSON

So far, the plan is failing. Countries with the capability to have the greatest impact on world hunger, including the United States, are not doing enough to fight malnourishment, even though decreasing hunger in the world is in every country's best interest.

The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) released a report last week showing that although the number of hungry has decreased, it has done so at a disappointing rate. In fact, while the number of hungry steadily fell during the early part of the 1990s, it raised during the later half. The total number of hungry in the world fell by 100 million in the five years between the 1990-1992 and 1995-1997. However, this reduction was offset

by the increase of 60 million hungry in other parts of the world. So the net reduction was only 40 million, which averages to only 8 million a year.

Currently, an estimated 790 million are chronically malnourished and, according to The Hunger Site Web site, 24,000 people die per day from hunger; 75 percent of whom are less than 5 years old.

To meet the World Food Summit goal, the net reduction in the hungry will have to be more than 30 million a year, which is unlikely unless the approach to hunger is drastically changed.

As the FAO report released last week says, "Bluntly stated, the problem is not so much a lack of food as a lack of political will."

The FAO report stresses that, while the causes of hunger can vary among countries, four main causes can be clearly identified: war, drought, AIDS and trade barriers. In Cambodia, which has seen an almost 30 percent reduc-

tion in undernutrition since 1986, the largest causal factor was the end of military conflicts. North Korea, which has seen a 30 percent increase in hunger, according to the FAO report, was hit hard in the 1990s by floods and droughts and a collapse of its trade relationships with China and the former U.S.S.R.

The relationship between AIDS and hunger is a vicious cycle. Because people in rural areas are unable to adequately feed themselves, they move to highly populated cities, where they get diseases. Women and children trade sex for food. As a higher population of people contract AIDS, food becomes scarce because the labor force is dying.

The 182 countries that signed the anti-hunger declaration must focus on the four areas — drought, AIDS, war and trade barriers — to stop the spread of hunger in developing nations.

Countries need to intervene in areas where people are suffering from political unrest, such as in the Congo, where 75 percent of the population is malnourished, according to The New York Times.



MAHESH NEELAKANTAN • THE BATTALION

Programs to stop the spread of AIDS must be utilized in the areas most affected by the disease. Better irrigation and drainage systems need to be introduced in countries to prepare them for natural disasters (65 percent to 80 percent of food emergencies are caused by droughts and floods) and develop local sustainable agriculture.

Besides war, drought, trade barriers and AIDS, one other cause of hunger exists: the lack of participation of women in the decision-making process. In Africa, according to the World Food Programme, eight out of 10 farmers are women; in Asia, the number is six out of 10. One-third of households worldwide have women as the sole breadwinners. Also, food aid distributed to women is more likely to reach the mouths of starving children. To decrease hunger in developing countries, those most involved in agriculture have to be brought into the decision-making process.

To meet the goal in reducing the number of hungry by half by 2015, the countries that signed the pledge need to get serious about working toward it. Countries can no longer simply pay lip service to the idea of stopping starvation, while 24,000 people continue to die every day from lack of food.

Jenelle Wilson is a senior political science major.

## Judicial nominees show disrespect for system of law

In 1788, Alexander Hamilton foresaw the federal judiciary as being the "best expedient which can be devised in any government, to secure a steady, upright and impartial administration of the laws." More than 200 years later, however, ideological partiality has become a dynamic factor in deciding the makeup of federal courts. The judicial branch — intended by the founding fathers to be free from the taint of politics, guided only by constitutional doctrine and never by ideology — has constantly faced judges nominated by the Bush administration for the sole purpose of advancing a right-wing political agenda.



JOHN DAVID BLAKLEY

Such abuse of the presidential power to nominate federal judges has, fortunately, been hindered by the efforts of Democrats in the U.S. Senate in many, but not all cases. Filibustering by Senate Democrats has prevented Republicans from mustering the 60 votes needed to appoint a handful of judges considered to be outside the judicial mainstream. Senate Democrats, despite criticism from the White House, have acted responsibly, as these nominees lack the conscious separation of political opinion and practical jurisprudence desired in federal judges.

The Bush administration's breaking with the U.S. government's 50-year-old practice of using a special committee of the American Bar Association to screen potential nominees to the federal bench is a clear indication of how far the current administration is willing to go to successfully appoint judges who share its political opinions. Since the days of President Eisenhower, a 15-member ABA Committee has contacted lawyers, judges and others familiar with the potential nominee and rated each as well-qualified, qualified or not qualified. The elimination of this evaluation process, created by Eisenhower as a safeguard against nominations based on political leanings, removes a vital instrument which ensures nominees meet basic standards of competence.

Among the nominees who have failed to pass a cloture vote is Janice Rogers Brown, who has been nominated to the D.C. Court of Appeals, a hot spot for U.S. Supreme Court nominees, including three current justices. To fill this important vacancy, President George W. Bush selected a judge of the California Judicial Nominations Evaluation Commission received specific complaints about, calling Brown "careless of established legal precedent, who has had difficulty grasping complex litigation, lacked compassion and tolerance for opposing views, misunderstood legal standards and was slow to produce opinions," according to the Alliance for Justice. As cited by The New York Times, Brown, who serves on the California Supreme Court, has also publicly questioned the legal doctrine of incorporation, which holds that the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Bill of Rights apply to the states. Every first-year law student knows this is settled doctrine.

Another nominee, Justice Priscilla Owen of the Texas Supreme Court, has failed to pass cloture vote four times since May. Owen's nomination has brought forth many concerns regarding a lack of judicial ethics during her time on the court. In the past, Owen has accepted campaign contributions from corporate parties, including Enron and Halliburton, who have later appeared before the court. Not only has Owen failed to recuse herself from such cases, she has also rendered decisions favorable to her contributors.

Judge Carolyn Kuhl also failed to receive approval from the U.S. Senate due to a controversial record. A dissent in *Sanchez-Scott v. Alza Pharmaceuticals* is the pinnacle of Kuhl's shameful record on individual rights. In this particular case, Kuhl dismissed a breast cancer patient's claim of invasion of privacy after her doctor brought a drug company representative into the

room during a breast exam.

The work of Senate Democrats is not over, as the National Abortion Rights Action League reports that a vote could be called soon on nominee James Leon Holmes, a professor at the University of Arkansas School of Law in Little Rock. Holmes wrote in an article in the *Arkansas Catholic Review* that "the wife is to subordinate herself to the husband and ... (that) the woman is to place herself under the authority of the man." Such chauvinism has no place in any court.

A disreputable record on the bench is not the only attribute these nominees share. All four have consistently supported big business and opposed reproductive rights, patient rights, civil rights, gay rights and worker rights. Not only are these characteristics consistently shared by Bush nominees, but they are direct reflections of the president's policy making.

Judicial ethics and independence, the source from which all courts receive respect from the public, cannot be compromised for the promotion of a political agenda.

The lack of respect shown by the Bush administration toward judicial independence will ultimately lead to a federal court system doomed to fall short of fully effectual jurisprudence. Such actions will deprive the country of another Louis Brandeis, John Marshall, William Douglas or Oliver Wendell Holmes, and leave us with mere servants of the executive, draped in the honorable robes of justices.

John David Blakley is a sophomore political science major.

### Aggie ancestors would be ashamed

I am horrified, infuriated and sickened at the amount of people who are outraged on this campus. The lack of satisfaction on this campus displayed in the Mail Call section of The Battalion has us all recalling our favorite Rolling Stones song. What would Sully Ross or E. King Gill think of such actions? This type of attitude is deplorable and is very un-Aggie like. Next time you feel like you are going to get outraged, please, think of Bum Bright and what he might do.

Mark Chandler  
Class of 2003

### The Aggie spirit is alive and well

As time ran out against the University of Texas and the Aggies season, thousands of maroon-clad students exited Kyle Field with more than just hoarse voices from yelling and sore shoulders from waving our towels. We left with a stronger

sense of the Aggie Spirit. As we made our way down the ramps, you could hear a noise. Faint at first, but as more joined in, it became clear. The Spirit and The War Hymn were being sung. Maybe it was to intimidate the few brave UT fans who dared to sit among the sea of maroon. But I say it was more than that. Everyone around you, singing the songs we hold so dear, even after the game was over. The Aggie spirit is alive and well.

### Everyone is entitled to free speech

With all due respect to President Gates, everyone does have the right to freedom of speech. There is no caveat to this right that states people must present their sentiments with a "genuine sense of civility." The true meaning of diversity is difference, yet he condemns those who hold opinions that differ from his.

People may freely express their criticism of his policies; it is shame-

ful that he feels he is politically constrained to defend the issue of diversity by attacking other American citizens practicing their rights.

Tim Luza, Jr.  
Class of 2005

### To accept diversity is to accept humility

In response to a Nov. 26 mail call:

Choosing diversity at a school like Texas A&M is a dangerous, yet necessary move. Dangerous yes, because of the one thing we hold so dear: our "traditions." Traditions rooted on the backward mentality of how things used to work. We, as Aggies, should ask ourselves why the rest of the world thinks that we are the most backward school in Texas.

The fact of the matter is that our "traditions" force us to fight against having diversity. I've heard many Aggies say that we're just fine the way things are, and that diversity will change the good ol' boy image that Aggies of old fought to create for the school.

What are you so afraid of?

To accept diversity is to accept humility. Folks, this is college. You came not only for a degree, but to become a more diverse person, to expand your horizon. Soften your grip and use that Aggie spirit for once. I guarantee you that if we do not take this high road now, UT will continue to get bigger and better, in every aspect of academia and athletics. In the end, Texas A&M will be just another school down the road with a bunch of "traditions" that no one can relate to.

Wole Faleye  
Class of 2002

### Demonstration was oversimplifying issue

In response to a Dec. 1 mail call:

So what if YCT didn't send "flyers," the "bake sale" was an ugly, ill-informed attempt to oversimplify a complex issue. Assuming that such a bake sale is used as an analogy for diversity policy, then it also presumes that institutional diversity can exist absent consideration of

the historical context which produced unequal institutional outcomes. When Davis argues that YCT will cut through "innuendo and euphemism," maybe she should actually learn what those words mean, as the intent of the bake sale was to demonstrate, in the overly simplistic, reactionary psyche of the YCT, the ills of a system of preferences euphemistically.

And worse than that is the misleading claim that YCT promotes racial diversity. Conservatives have made similar claims in opposing the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act. How can we attain diversity in any manner palatable to such a group that opposes any effort to promote it? Is it a surprise when they offer nothing more than merit as an alternative, neglecting that merit remains a consideration when preferences are considered?

There is a reason why most of the arguments in opposition to racial and gender preferences are anecdotal in nature, and that's because little if any statistically verifiable data is available to back up those claims.

Nicolas Rangel Jr.  
Doctoral Student

### MAIL CALL