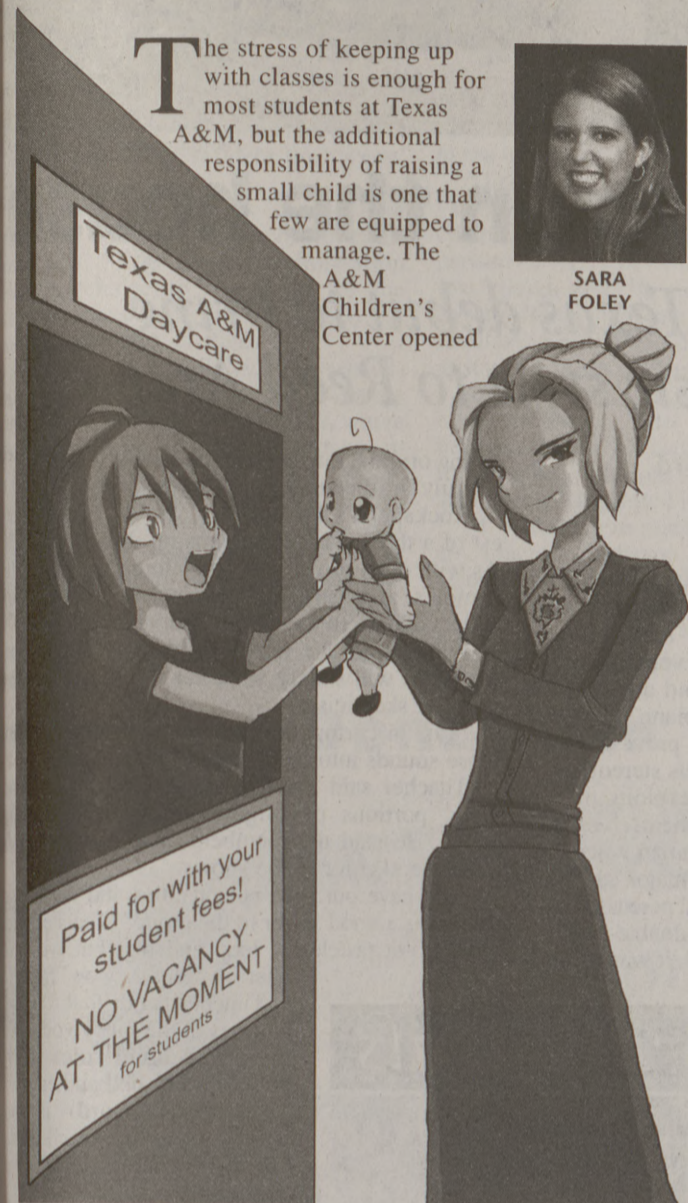


Kidding around

Children's Center must receive more money to help Aggies with raising young



SARA FOLEY

The stress of keeping up with classes is enough for most students at Texas A&M, but the additional responsibility of raising a small child is one that few are equipped to manage. The A&M Children's Center opened

in 1998 to offer child-care services for students at a discounted rate through funds supplied by the student service fee.

One would assume that a center founded and financially supported with students in mind would reflect that focus in all of its actions. In fact, its mission statement states that its aim is to "promote access to higher education" through "quality child care for University parents," according to a presentation pleading for an increase in funds made to the Student Service Fee Advisory Board in August 2003.

Don't be deceived, though. Despite the insinuation that "University parents" refers to students at A&M, the A&M Children's Center provides care for less than 80 children of students this year, or 48 percent of its allotted spaces. The remaining spots are for those "University parents" who are employed by the University as either faculty or staff. The Children's Center must allocate more money to students and actually accomplish what its mission statement stipulates.

The center offers reduced payments for student-led or low-income families. In the 2003 fiscal year, 31 families received child-care payment discounts ranging from 15 percent to 25 percent. Had the fee referendum on the recent student body election passed, more student-led families could have been eligible for discounts that help them offset expensive child-care costs.

Di Fontenot, director of the center, said the student service fee is not a significant portion of its budget, which is approximately \$1 million, but merely a supplement for student families to pay for child-care fees.

However, the center received \$59,300 in funds from student service fees in 2003, but only \$30,000 of it went toward assistance in child-care payments.

President of the Graduate Student Council Josh Peschel said child care is one of the services that directly benefits graduate students, but didn't think enough of the student service fee money went toward the child-care and other programs that benefit graduate students.

Where the rest of the money goes is unclear.

In the request for additional funding in August 2003, the Children's Center also requested money for supplies and salary increases that were denied by the Student Service Fee Advisory Board. The Children's Center receives a substantial amount of funding from other venues, such as federal grants, the Child & Adult Care Food Program, the College of Agriculture, the College of Engineering, The Association of Former Students and The Texas A&M Bookstore, as well as donations of supplies and resources from various student groups on campus including Junior League and Aggie Moms Clubs.

These sources should finance supplies, needs and other budget concerns. This will allow the money students pay in fees to go toward assisting other A&M students with the financial burdens that accompany raising children.

The center's problems don't stop there. For a child to be admitted into the center, he is placed on a waiting list that is 200 names long. When the financial assistance is only a slight possibility, parents have better chances seeking other daycare facilities no university related.

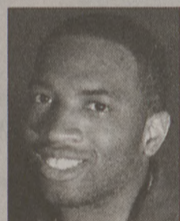
The role of parents often calls for sacrifice.

Unfortunately, due to inadequate fund allocation by the A&M Children's Center, this may cause parents to wait to complete their degrees until their children are older. The center must make their services more available to students to avoid this situation.

Sara Foley is a junior journalism major. Graphic by Ivan Flores

Reparations would hurt blacks in the country

Advances in DNA technology have improved the ability to link crimes to suspects. Recently, DNA has been used by misguided activists seeking reparations for American slavery. But these people, who waste so much energy futilely pursuing something they will never have, would do better to channel their resources on issues that truly affect the black community.



COLLINS EZEANYIM

On March 29, descendants of slaves filed a \$1 billion lawsuit against American and British corporations in federal court in Manhattan, according to an Associated Press story. The corporations include Lloyd's of London, FleetBoston and R.J. Reynolds. What makes this lawsuit intriguing and, frankly, somewhat disturbing is that the eight plaintiffs have used DNA technology to link themselves to blacks who brutally suffered due to the American slave trade.

All Americans recognize slavery as a permanent stain on American history. It was a disgusting, dehumanizing institution that undermined the United States' foundation as a free and democratic republic.

But unfortunately, no living slave is available to collect the restitution that he has rightfully earned. It would be acceptable if the children of the released slaves were served reparations. The plaintiffs of this lawsuit are too far removed to morally collect any money relating to the slave trade.

It is obvious that reparations activists do not only seek to gain financially, but they wish to punish someone for the past horrors caused by American slavery. The stories of how American slaves were treated would certainly make almost anyone want to lash out. Unfortunately, in the same way the victims of slavery are gone, the perpetrators of those hideous acts are also no longer around.

If the reparations activists truly wanted to do something positive, instead of suing companies that have profited from slavery in the past, they could work with these corporations to invest in inner-city neighborhoods and to support diversity-building policies such as affirma-

tion action.

One of the plaintiffs is Deadria Farmer-Paellmann, a name many who follow the activities of reparations activists will recognize. A couple of years ago, Farmer-Paellmann made headlines when she was the only named plaintiff in a reparations lawsuit against Aetna, an insurer, the railroad CSX and FleetBoston, a financial services firm. In the latest lawsuit, Farmer-Paellmann is identified as a descendant of the Mende tribe in Sierra Leone. DNA evidence has also linked other plaintiffs to tribes in Niger and Gambia, according to the Farmer-Paellmann may be an intelligent woman, but it is an awful shame she isn't using her abilities to achieve good.

All reparations activists should direct their energies to problems that affect the black community. For example, the National Urban League recently released a report, "The State of Black America 2004," which concluded that the "Equality Index," or "the statistical measurement of the disparities that exist between blacks and whites in economics, housing, education, health, social justice and civic engagement," revealed that the status of black Americans is 73 percent lower than their white counterparts.

This is an issue that needs to be dealt with immediately, but it cannot be addressed through reparations activism. The attitudes of black Americans must be talked about seriously. Black and white relations must also be examined, and reconciliation must be advocated. But pursuing financial redress for slavery will only create divisions in a country that is increasingly becoming more accepting of its racial differences.

Farmer-Paellmann and the other reparation plaintiffs have a choice. They can leave a legacy of bettering the lives of black Americans, or they can be seen as greedy opportunists who profited from the sweat and blood of their distant ancestors.

Collins Ezeanyim is a senior computer engineering major.

"Unfortunately, in the same way the victims of slavery are gone, the perpetrators of those hideous acts are also no longer around."

MAIL CALL

Bush knows what he is doing in Iraq

In response to Collins Ezeanyim's April 12 column:

In previous columns, Mr. Ezeanyim rags on President Bush for getting us into a quagmire with no end in sight. Now, he is criticizing him for taking steps to transfer power to the Iraqis and greatly reduce our role in Iraq, eventually ending our presence there.

Keep in mind, the U.S. military will not just pick up and leave on June 29. It will remain to back the new government until it can take care of itself and its people. Steps like this must be taken or we will be there forever, proving cretins like Kerry, Kennedy and Mr. Ezeanyim correct through our inaction. If, as he says, this turnover is so risky, why would Bush want to stick to the June 30 deadline with the election coming up?

You should be overjoyed — this is a win-win situation for liberals. If the turnover goes well, then our troops come home sooner, so the "quagmire" will be over and liberals won't have to waste their breath wailing about it and they can then go grandstand over something else. If, however, the transferring of sovereignty to Iraqis turns into a blood bath, the people will punish Bush for it in the voting booth, whether justified or not.

Paul Sims
Class of 2006

Admission policy must ignore race

In response to a April 12 mail call:

This race-based admission debate has gone overboard. According to Kellee Carr on Monday's mail call, she says to blame the educational system of Texas. I find this quite amusing. Teachers cannot force kids to want to learn. It is up to the parents to promote the advantages of being well educated, not the teachers.

I find it sad that parents don't want to do their jobs anymore as parents and leave the burden of

teaching all aspects of life, right and wrong, up to the teachers. But when their children slack in school and don't keep up with their grades they automatically blame the teachers and schools, but not themselves. I say the University should try this race-based admissions procedure for a few years. Once they see that the dropout rate increases exponentially, maybe they will come to their senses.

Jordan Chambers
Class of 2004

Suggestive art must be stopped

In response to Ivan Flores' April 12 graphic:

I sat down yesterday before my calculus class, ready to get my daily news from The Battalion, but when I opened up the paper, I was once again disappointed by the artwork chosen. The Battalion has in many past newspapers chosen to use a risqué picture for illustration, and Monday's was no exception. This needs to stop now.

Aggies read The Battalion for news, sports and crossword puzzles, not to see a picture of a girl in a skin-tight shirt and low-rise jeans. I know Monday's picture doesn't even come close to the promiscuity of some graphics published earlier this year, but it was still inappropriate.

I commend The Battalion's artists for their abilities to draw, but their pictures often are offensive and completely uncalled for. I encourage The Battalion editor and staff in the future to chose artwork

that is more suitable for a newspaper, not a Maxim magazine.

Daniel Nieswiadomy
Class of 2007

A&M logo belongs on maroon only

Our University is one of the most prideful schools in the nation. We have no problem in telling people how great our education is because it came from Texas A&M. To show our pride, we love to wear A&M apparel. You cannot walk into a classroom and not see at least one "Texas A&M" shirt, hat, or shorts. And I wished it stopped there.

I am seeing something these days that is completely out of line and inappropriate. You might look around today and see somebody wearing an A&M shirt that is not maroon. I've seen everything from blue to green to pink! Are those our school colors? Then why are you wearing them?

I believe it is necessary to make students wear at least one piece of maroon A&M clothing a day. Then we can maroon out every day!

Charles Holland
Class of 2005

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

