



Aigat Your Back

Family Matters

SUSANNA AIGA
Opinions Editor

Family is one of those annoyingly multi-layered phenomena that can be either a poison or remedy. Unfortunately, it seems that most cannot really appreciate their parents until raising children themselves and there is probably truth in experience being the best teacher. However, we can still begin to reconcile with them now.

The relationship between parents and their children is often a rocky one. It seems that wherever there is love, there are expectations. Just as we have expectations for our parents, our parents have certain hopes for us and when there are such standards in a relationship, there is bound to be disappointment and pain. Parents want us to be successful, but also to avoid potentially painful experiences; we want our parents to be loving, but not suffocating. And so the complaints begin—our parents push us beyond our limits, they play favorites between siblings, they pay too much attention to us, they pay too little.

Sometimes all we can see are the “mistakes” our parents made in raising us, and our pain is often validated. Ultimately, though, we owe our parents so much more than they owe us. They deserve more appreciation and less blame just on sheer principle alone. Sometimes we just need to remind ourselves that they did the best they could with the little they had.

U.S. Playing Catch-Up for Working Americans

ELTON HO
Copy Editor

In his 2015 State of the Union address, Obama outlined some key goals of workplace reform for the year: a minimum wage increase, mandatory paid sick leave and gender pay equity. While reforms may find difficulty passing through the Republican-majority House and Senate, Obama's goals would be beneficial for most Americans and would allow the nation to keep up with other progressive countries.

In 2013, 3.3 million workers were paid at or below the current federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. This amount would fail to support most people. A full-time minimum-wage worker earns an annual income of \$15,080, already below the poverty line of a 2-person household before taxes, according to the U.S. Department of

Health and Human Services. Evidently, a minimum wage increase is necessary, not to unfairly redistribute wealth as some claim, but to allow an adequate standard of living for all workers. Students are familiar with the inconvenient choice of either attending school while miserably sick or resting at home and making up days of work. However, this can become a more drastic dilemma for workers when it becomes a choice between health and pay. The Center for Economic and Policy Research has found that



out of 22 comparatively wealthy countries, the U.S. is the only one that would not provide any worker's compensation for either a 5-day flu or a 50-day cancer treatment.

A bill that guarantees seven paid sick days a year, as Obama proposed, would be a simple step in the right direction. Moreover, as if U.S. worker's rights could not lag behind other countries enough, the U.S. ranks last in government support for new parents when compared to 37 other countries, according to the Organization for Economic

Cooperation and Development. While the Family and Medical Leave Act allows certain eligible employees to receive up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave in a 12-month period to care for a child, all workers should be able to enjoy these benefits, plus at least some financial compensation.

Perhaps most importantly, the U.S. must address the issue of gender pay inequity. Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics have long shown that women make less than men in every occupation. The pay gap has not changed in a decade, and will not change until action is taken. One would think that gender equality would be a nonpartisan issue by now, but in September 2014, Senate Republicans inexplicably blocked the Paycheck Fairness Act, according to the Huffington Post.

With several important reforms on the table, hopefully 2015 can be a year of government cooperation in addressing these priorities.

Thousands of Innocent Nigerians Suffer Silent Deaths

PAULA KIRYA
Staff Writer

According to Amnesty International, the Islamic terrorist group Boko Haram is currently performing its “deadliest massacre” so far, yet nobody seems to notice. BBC reports that Boko Haram has been actively violent since 2009, causing the deaths of thousands of citizens living in Nigeria. When #BringBackOurGirls began trending online, informing the public of Boko Haram's kidnapping of 200 Nigerian schoolgirls, people actually started to notice their crimes. Yet even that eventually drifted away from public attention.

Although the Charlie Hebdo attack was tragic, it is troubling how 3.7 million people would march in the streets of Paris for 17 people, yet fail to recognize the massacre of thousands who were burned alive, shot, drowned and hunted. It seems that society has decided that some lives are worth more than others because of their positions in life and it has gotten to the point that we do not even realize it. As stated by Simon Allison of the Daily Maverick, “African lives are still deemed less newsworthy—and, by implication, less valuable—than western lives.”

Developed countries have been sending volunteers, troops and money, only to see that

much of Africa has practically maintained its original state of corruption and poverty, making people wonder why the Nigerians cannot just help themselves. It is agreeable that African countries have not progressed as expected over the years despite the resources that have been provided to them. However, citizens lack the political and educational advancements that would enable them to fix their government. It is hard for people to think of advancing when their community is being bombarded with explosives. However, if western countries collaborated with African countries more actively in their fight against terrorism, Africa could be a more peaceful place.

Reforming Nation's Education System to Improve Standards and Accessibility

REBECCA ZENG
Staff Writer

Other countries' educational standards are often compared to the U.S.' educational standards. The U.S. is unlikely to match the educational standards of other countries because every country has different economies, demographics and government types; however, the nation should focus on reforming education by keeping standards consistent while making education more accessible to all students.

The Horace Mann League and the National Superin-

tendents Roundtable, organizations that strive to improve the U.S. public education system, recently co-published a study comparing various countries' education systems. Though the U.S. had the most educated workforce and substantial school completion rates in this study, its scores for social inequity, support for families and social stress were poor. Obama's free community college proposal attempts to remedy social inequity. Anti-bullying assemblies and campaigns on campus have attempted to lessen social stress in schools. Though these could appear effective on a larger scale, the anti-bullying campaigns

fail to aid individual students with their struggles. In addition, according to the study, family-oriented problems included inadequate spending on social support for families, child abuse and lack of access to preschools. This suggests that teachers and school boards should work more closely with students and their families in order to pinpoint the needs of students and find solutions to specific problems.

The U.S. education system has its pros and cons; the nation has a lot of potential, but this potential needs to be harnessed in order to effectively provide for the educational community.

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