

## Depriving children of their rights

heather fried

America seems to have the notion that children are not people. We eagerly pat them on the head and laugh at their antics, but never take them seriously or give their intelligence the credit it deserves, especially in the decision of what is best for the child.

Stories about custody battles are making headlines in primetime news programs. A recent story involves two brothers, both given after birth to be raised by a loving family, where they could remain together and escape growing up in a household where the mother was neither financially nor emotionally able to care for them and where they would live with a man that beats their mother. It is a sad thing indeed to see the courts even consider honoring the request of the biological mother who now wants to bring the youngest of those boys, now three and a half years old, back into that house. Doing so would deprive him of the wonderful people he believes to be his parents and the older brother he loves more than anyone in the world. Such a movement would in no way be in his best interest. The judge has only to ask him whether he would want to move, as his current parents al-

ready have, and the issue could be easily and favorably decided.

Headlines about Baby Isaiah and other children in his situation make the front pages of our most prestigious newspapers weekly. Magazines and hour-long television shows continuously run stories about the latest custody battle raging in the United States and about the toddler that has captured America's heart. Unfortunately, too many of these sagas end tragically for so many innocent children.

While the judges hearing these cases look carefully at both parties fighting for custody, it seems that they tend to overlook the most important person in the whole affair: the child. It would seem that after seeing child after child ripped away kicking and screaming from the only home life he has ever known, and delivered into the hands of people who before either did not want him or were unfit to properly rear him, that judges might start to put the best interests of the children at heart. Yet when was the last time you heard a three-year old asked who they would prefer to live with?

Contrary to popular belief, children do have a very good idea of what is right for them. We trust that when they push their plates away they have eaten enough, and that when they wake up in the wee hours of

the morning they have slept enough. Why can we not invest that same trust in their judgement when it pertains to their emotional well-being? It can not be that a smaller stature and a smaller vocabulary warrants giving a person less rights, for dwarves and idiots in this country are allowed to choose a home life that best suits them. The only answer to this question seems to be that the time-honored constitutional phrase 'all men are created equal' does not apply to children.

Indeed, Americans boast about the incredible fairness of the U.S. court system while a large percentage of the population is being stripped of its rights, exploited by the press, and ripped from their happy homes. The justification of the judges is in the mistaken idea that a child's genetic parents are the most qualified for raising it.

Why mess with a good thing? If a child is in a happy, supportive environment where he or she is well taken care of, do not take them away unless they agree to go. If social services does not believe that a child is old enough to make a decision than wait until it is old enough rather than force it to undergo a traumatic experience.

## A balanced educational NCSSM

shannon meyer

A definite bias exists in our society towards mathematics and the sciences. After all, physics makes the world go 'round, and math is responsible for our continuously compounded bank accounts. Time and again I've seen and read the disrespect with which people involved with the more technical side of life treat the humanities. But poets, musicians, and English teachers deserve just as much respect as engineers, nuclear physicists, and chemistry teachers.

When did how fast our cars go become more important than our feelings and our relations with other people? Much of my happiness in life comes from the literature that I read and my love for music. Though efficient calculators, running water, and satellites are great conveniences, they do not contribute to a more meaningful or fulfilling life. Poetry, novels, music, and film all help us tap our humanity, while many technological advances only work to stifle it. The Internet is a prime example; it allows people to live, or should I say merely subsist, without even leaving the house.

Furthermore, the humanities are essential to understanding ourselves and the world in which we live. Modern govern-

ments rely on social and political history to help them avoid revolutions by dealing successfully with class struggles, thus making our peachy little world all the more safe to drive our energy efficient cars and enjoy our artificial organs. Books and papers have been the instigators of revolutions, political as well as scientific, social, and intellectual, throughout history. And music has been a prime source for the expression and inspiration of not only love or desire, but also of political messages, as in the songs of the 1960's, and morale boosters, as in "The Star-Spangled Banner," which carried us through the War of 1812 with pride. That anyone can disregard the power of the written word or song or consider it less than the forces of gravity or electricity astounds me.

Sadly, this bias is quite evident in the fact that everyone reading this newspaper attends the School of Science and Mathematics; notice there is no mention of any humanities in this title. Granted, North Carolina does have a school dedicated to the arts, but the arts alone. So I suppose anyone looking to attain a higher level of education in English, history, foreign languages, and so on, while in high school is just out of luck.

I do appreciate this school, but it could use

some changes. Many of my peers and I came to NCSSM for the opportunity to get a better, more challenging, education in general. I have always excelled in all of my courses, until I came here, of course, but my forté is in English, not chemistry or calculus. And the school's Humanities Department is wonderful, but it deserves some recognition and some expansion. Many students have mentioned the addition of a drama class to the course list, and my personal preference leads me to feel that another history class that is not paired with an English, as opposed to a course such as WRRD, could be used. I realize that suggesting a name change is too radical to be taken seriously, but it might help admissions and make those of us who are not so inclined toward science and math feel less guilty about being here.

During my interview for admissions to this school, I was asked how I would give back to the state of North Carolina for what they have invested in me by paying for my education here. No doubt the desired answer was to come back and be a doctor or build better bridges. But I believe that I can contribute just as much to the state and world as a whole by coming back and writing a wonderful novel, composing music, or teaching history.

## Powwow~P1

a Veterans dance to honor all of those who had fought in wars. The program then continued with dancing and singing. After a break for dinner, the activities resumed with another Grand Entry at seven o'clock and the powwow continued until around ten o'clock. All through the day's events, various Native American arts

and crafts, from peashooters and dream catchers to jewelry and clothing, were on exhibit and for sale by the vendors. Every year, the powwow is an amazing opportunity to experience Native American culture. The NCSSM powwow has grown a great deal in its relatively short history. This year, there was not even room

enough for all of the drum groups that showed up to play. This fabulous tradition has come a long way, and each year it continues to enhance the variety of cultural awareness at NCSSM. Powwow organizers hope that next year's powwow will be as much a success as this year's spectacular event.



Native American woman sales dolls at Ninth Annual Powwow.

doug paletta