

Monday, June 7, 1993

...TODAY'S TOON IS DEDICATED TO THE HUNDREDS OF AGGIES WHO TRAVEL ABROAD EACH SUMMER IN A QUEST FOR TRUTH, KNOWLEDGE, AND SELF.



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EDITORIAL

Let justice be done

Criminal court no place for politics

Death penalty opponents have seized upon the case of Gary Graham, convicted in 1981 of capital murder and sentenced to death, as a vehicle to propel their campaign.

Graham, who has received two 30-day stays of execution, was found guilty of robbing Bobby Lambert of less than \$100 and shooting him to death in a supermarket parking lot in Houston.

Graham pleaded guilty to 10 similar robberies in supermarket parking lots, in which two victims were shot and one raped.

He claims to have been with friends during the robbery of Lambert and says his conviction is the result of racism, because he is black and the victim was white.

Racism, however, would appear to have little to do with the eyewitness testimony of Bernadine Skillern, a black schoolteacher who testified against Graham at his trial. In a like vein, the crusade to save Graham from lethal injection appears to have less to do with informed debate than with the politicization of American justice.

The Texas Resource Center, Amnesty International, USA, the

NAACP Legal Defense Fund and other activist organizations and individuals are coordinating campaigns touting Graham's innocence.

They have enlisted the aid of actors, musicians, and Hollywood celebrities to take their anti-death penalty case to the public and put pressure on Texas political and legal officials.

It is quite unlikely, though, that movie stars know any more about the case than did the jurors who found Graham guilty a decade ago.

Additionally, this campaign, coupled with fears of jury intimidation in trials of Los Angeles and Miami police due to the threat of violence points to an alarming trend toward mob justice.

It must be remembered that public pressure for an acquittal or a reprieve one day can be mirrored by cries for blood the next.

Courts work best when insulated from public pressures, with the proviso, of course, that the proceedings be open to public observation.

They become a hollow mockery when they are ruled by movie stars and media campaigns.

Money isn't all that important?

Lack of funding disintegrating inner city schools

An African-American high school in the 1960s:
The chalk-board is marked by pocked areas, the slate is broken and the contents removed. The whole decor is indistinguishable from that of other institutionalized rooms seen in the local jail or poorhouse.

— James Irwin

An African-American high school in the 1980s:
Blackboards at the school are so badly cracked that teachers are afraid to let students write on them for fear they'll cut themselves. Teachers and students have come to see humor in the waterfall that courses down six flights of stairs after a heavy rain.



TRACEY JONES
Columnist

— Jonathan Kozol

African-American children have been saddled with inferior educational programs and facilities since the days of Reconstruction. Their schools have been historically plagued by segregation and underfunding. Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 improved the conditions of lower middle class and middle class blacks, it failed to have an impact on the huge black underclass. Segregation and underfunding still dwell in school systems and urban residential areas that are predominantly black, creating a pool of the mostly poor, unskilled, and uneducated.

Because of the poverty of the school districts, the educational institutions that depend on local funding are forced to employ fewer teachers and administrators. In addition, they are left to choose from a pool of educators who are lacking in experience and/or have had little specialized preparation for the teaching of children who bring with them different cultural and familial values, modes of speaking, or interpretations of national and local events.

Poor educational attainment leads to limited occupational opportunities. Lower paying jobs in turn prevent citizens from moving to better neighborhoods that provide better educational systems.

This unending cycle of poor educational attainment is the rationale behind the Texas Supreme Court ultimatum: the court insisted that the Texas public education system equal out funding between its poor and wealthy districts or else face termination of state aid to these districts. In states all across the country — including Texas — minority chil-

dren residing in poor urban centers often attend schools that are not able to provide adequate supplies of books, lab equipment, learning aids or even classroom space due to financial constraints.

For various reasons state legislators, superintendents, administrators, and parents in more affluent districts have been staunchly opposed to integrative measures such as busing, school consolidation and channeling money into poorer districts. These people say they resist these actions because: a) money is not all that important without appropriate values and b) lower income children have differing/opposing moral and social standards.

Some children do not have adequate numbers of books nor are the schools able to provide them with current books.

But money is not all that important? Some children are being taught in converted restrooms and broom closets.

But money is not all that important? Some children are attending buildings with holes in the roofs.

But money is not all that important? It is true that children from lower income communities whose ties with the mainstream have been severed hold opposing moral codes.

They have no reason to internalize middle-class values for the simple reason that nothing in their environment corresponds to these values. College is not an entity that they necessarily aspire to; understanding that a solid education can greatly improve their chances of transcending the environment that they were raised in is not a concrete belief for them. And yes, once they have been encased in these pessimistic values for a great length of time, it is next to impossible to instill middle-class values in them by ages sixteen and seventeen. The teaching of values need to begin preferably in the formative years, no later than early childhood. By being exposed to role models (e.g. well prepared teachers, involved parents) and classroom situations that promote middle-class standards and values, children from differing backgrounds will begin to internalize at least a portion of these values. With time, the conflict between values can be greatly minimized.

So, since "money is not all that important," perhaps this time around it will not be a problem for the wealthier districts to share some of their funds with the children who reside in the poorer districts.

Jones is a senior psychology major



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Fight income tax hike instead of energy tax

Sen. David Boren is barking up the wrong tree when fighting Bill Clinton's proposed energy tax. He should be fighting the increase in income taxes instead. His argument against the energy tax is that it will hurt the economy. Well, no joke!

Any increase in taxes hurts the economy, but an income tax does far more damage than an energy tax. If you are smart, you can avoid an energy tax by becoming more energy efficient. The income tax is the worst kind of tax there is because it discourages exactly what we want to encourage. We want the economy to grow. We want people and businesses to be more productive.

But if you are more productive, you get punished with higher taxes. That just doesn't make any sense. We shouldn't tax what we want to encourage; we

should tax what we want to discourage, such as energy consumption.

Chris Marquette
Graduate student

Sorry, Rush, Olajuwon does deserve MVP

I would like to dispute Matthew J. Rush's claim in his column "Sorry Houston, Sir Charles deserved MVP," and specifically the logic behind his argument.

In his first two paragraphs he mentions Barkley's "Dream Team" performance, and his trade to Phoenix. Then Rush states "it is for all these reasons" that it should have been no surprise that Barkley won the MVP award. He goes on to explain that Barkley was robbed of the award in 1990. Then he lists Barkley's stats, and states "sorry again Hakeem et al, Charles was

the better man this year".

At this point, I will present a more objective argument than Rush. First, the Olympic team and move to Phoenix have nothing to do with being MVP. (Though it is debated as to what the criteria are, these reasons obviously do not fit.) Second, the claim of his being robbed in 1990 does not relate to the 1992-1993 season. Athletic awards should not be given out to right past wrongs. Third, the mention of Barkley's statistics is absurd, when compared to those of Hakeem. In seven major statistical categories, Barkley proved superior only in assists.

Rush's last argument seems to center on the team's respective success in the playoffs. This is the first logical point presented by Rush. Unfortunately, it is not valid when explaining voting for MVP, because the ballots are turned in long before playoffs begin.

If the playoff argument itself is considered, then again Rush is mistaken. The Suns have made the conference finals since 1982 (in 1989 and 1990). Also, the Suns almost had one of the biggest chokes in playoff history when they fell 0-2 to the Lakers. Third, the Rockets were one Kenny Smith or Vernon Maxwell jump shot away from playing the Suns in the conference finals. (Not to mention that the Rockets were cheated by the league in home court advantage, and some incredibly poor officiating in the

seventh game of the Sonics series.) Fourth, the Rockets were a lottery team a year ago, while the Suns have consistently posted winning records.

In conclusion, I have to say that I am a Houston sports fan (arguably, the toughest job in America). I was disappointed that Hakeem didn't win the MVP. There is no question that Barkley is a great player, but this year the MVP should have gone to Hakeem. My main problem with Rush's column is his lack of objectivity and logic. Instead of apologizing to Houston, why don't you apologize to your readers?

Sorry, Rush, you're mistaken in who deserves the MVP. Better luck next time.

Bill Tommaney
Graduate student

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