

OPINION

New history standards ignore true American past

American students are dumb. No, don't bother denying it: We don't know what happened, where it happened or how to find the oxidation coefficient of hydrogen in a vacuum.

The worst part about all this is that Joe-Average Mongolian apparently does know everything and is oh-so-willing to demonstrate this brilliance at the expense of the poor, undereducated American student.

In a blatant effort to overtake the Mongolian hordes (or at least figure out who they were), our government decided to define a set of standards for math and science.

In 1989, the National Endowment for the Humanities, under Lynne Cheney, and the Department of Education, under Lamar Alexander, decided America also needed a set of history standards.

Great idea. After all, we all wish we knew a little more about our Founding Fathers and how this country works. So the history department of UCLA was detailed with the task of figuring out what every student needs to know about American history.

Unfortunately, it seems that our estimable colleagues on the "left coast" decided they didn't like

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what has happened on this continent over the past 300 years ... so they changed it.

In the words of Prof. Gary Nash, co-director of the project, their "goal was to bring about nothing short of a new American revolution in history education."

Standards summary: America sucks. To expand, if there is anything that could make a student think less of the United States, it's in the standards ... repeatedly. For example, the standards mention Sen. Joseph McCarthy 19 times and the Ku Klux Klan 17 times.

On the other hand, George Washington is never identified as the "Father of Our Country," and Abraham Lincoln, when he's not being criticized, gets but one mention of his Gettysburg Address.

Lincoln and Washington should consider themselves lucky, however. Paul Revere, Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, Robert E. Lee, the Wright brothers, Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas Edison Albert Einstein and Jonas Salk (just to name a few) are never even mentioned.

The first meeting of the Continental Congress is not deemed important, but the founding of both the Sierra Club and the National Organization of Women is vital to students' ability to grasp U.S. History.

This story only gets better. John D. Rockefeller, the standards suggest, should have been put on a "mock trial" where he is accused of, "knowingly and willfully participating in unethical and amoral business practices designed to undermine traditions of fair open competition for personal and private aggrandizement in direct violation of the common welfare."

Oh. You mean he made money? Shocking! For comparison purposes, students are told to examine the "architecture, skills, labor practices and agriculture" of the Aztec Empire. Of course, these "labor practices" included human sacrifices on the steps of the temple - generally considered illegal under present U.S. Law.

Opposition to these standards has come from all sorts of sources. "Never mind the industrial revolution, the triumph of American agriculture [or] the creation of a tolerant, democratic state," noted Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchinson. "This new version of history is one long tail of predatory, greed-driven aggression."

Lynne Cheney and Lamar Alexander both oppose the standards. Alexander observed that the standards "ended up presenting a warped view of our nation's past." He urged President Clinton to "condemn these standards and make sure these standards are not promulgated or endorsed by the federal government."

The Senate, in a non-binding resolution, urged the Department of Education to reject the standards - the bill squeaked by the oh-so-close margin of 99-0.

The standards, however, are part of President Clinton's pet-project "Goals 2000." These standards, if implemented, will probably result in the "goal to have my kids in private school by 2000" program by the majority of us.

Then there's Al Gore, our illustrious junior assistant president. Last month the VP (and the P) were touring Monticello - that would be Thomas Jefferson's home, for those already under the new history standards.

During the tour, Al Gore turned to the guide, pointed at a number of busts along the wall, and asked, "Who are they?"

The guide answered, "The Founding Fathers." Maybe there should be some minimum history standards for those responsible for approving the minimum history standards.

Fortunately, I am sure Al Gore knows that hydrogen won't oxidize in a vacuum - there's no oxygen in a vacuum, not to mention hydrogen.

Any native Mongolian could have told you that.

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THE BATTALION

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EDITORIAL

FUNDS UNDER FIRE

Helms showed irresponsibility with his suggestion to cut AIDS funding.

North Carolina Sen. Jesse Helms once again has abused his position of influence and guidance.

In a New York Times interview last week, Helms suggested that the federal government reduce funding for AIDS research. Helms supported his position, claiming that AIDS is "transmitted by people deliberately engaging in 'unnatural' acts."

Such statements are classic examples of members of Congress using their positions in the media to peddle their personal moral theories. Obviously Jesse Helms does not realize he was not elected as a moral guardian, but as a protector of rights.

For people to have the gumption to honestly say what they are thinking is an admirable trait. A person who stands up for unpopular causes and is not afraid to suffer alongside the suffering deserves respect. However, Helms's actions were far from admirable.

President Clinton denounced

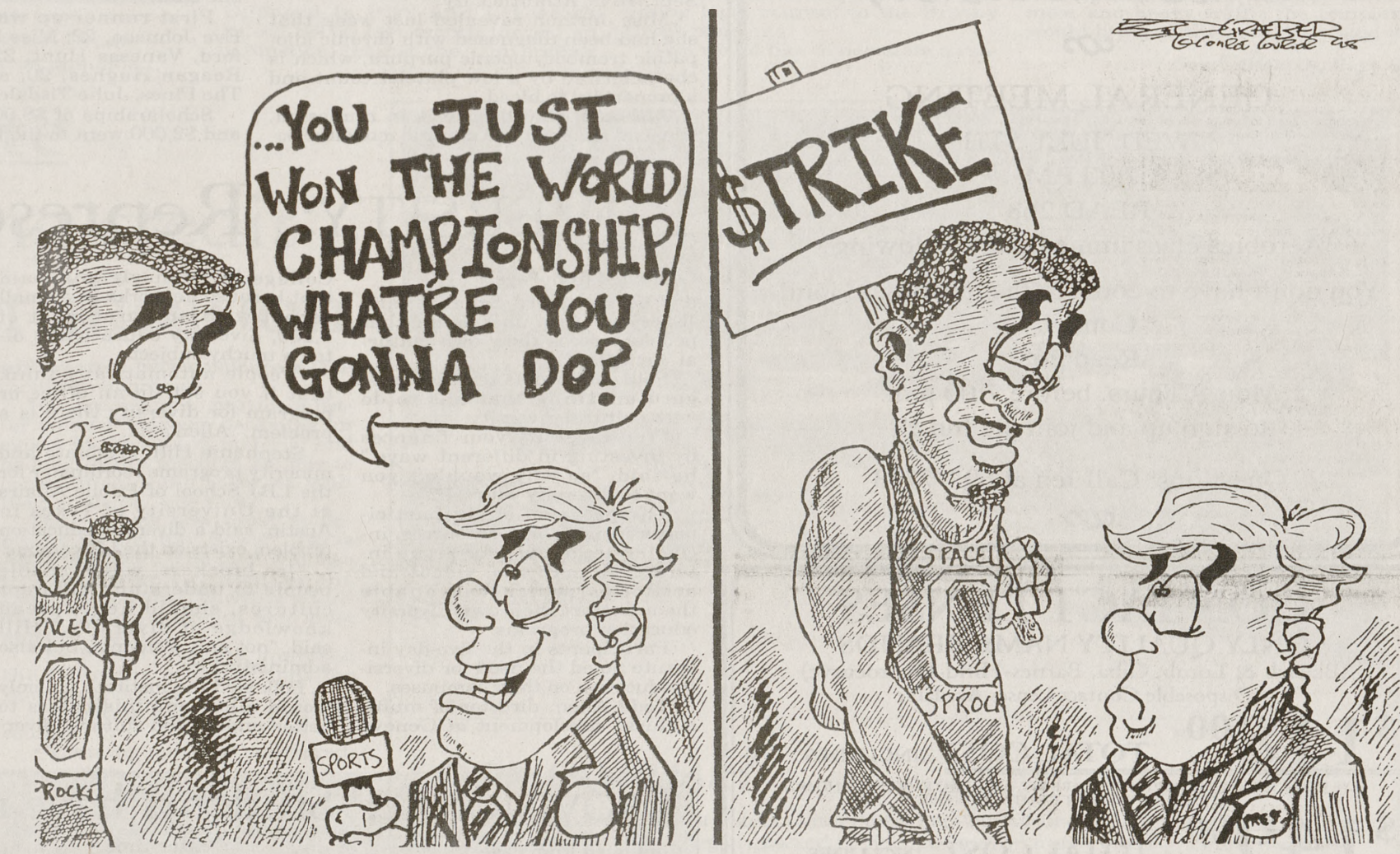
Helms's statements Friday at a speaking engagement at Georgetown University by saying, "The gay people who have AIDS are still our sons, our brothers, our cousins, our citizens. They're Americans, too."

But being homosexual or using dirty needles to inject illegal drugs is not the issue.

AIDS is a disease that does not discriminate, and funding for treatment and research should continue and should increase.

Helms's statements must be painful and astonishing to those who have lost innocent family, friends and loved ones to AIDS.

Helms, who is well-known for his outspokenness, once again has crossed the line. The fact that a U.S. senator is using his power to promote misconceptions shows much irresponsibility and poor judgment. Helms perhaps should educate himself on the deadly virus before he tries to educate the American public.



Sensational scandals stir public interest

I came to a mildly shocking conclusion while I was watching the "Gerald Rivera Show," on which the editor of "Big Butt" magazine was trading dull-witted barbs with the amply- and aptly-designated cover girl for "Juggs" magazine.

Most of our national media really ain't that great. And it really doesn't perceive the American public as being all that intellectually capable.

Each week we are treated to the newest shocking intrigue, the latest scandal involving celebrities from all fields of entertainment. They have usually murdered, castrated, conspired against, solicited or attacked somebody. If there is a sexual angle, the scandals are treated as even more captivating.

The drama of the OJ Simpson trial has been acted out continuously for our collective eyes over the past six months. One can watch hours upon endless hours of it each and every day on CNN.

And in case somebody actually had to be at work or school during the day, there's always the analysis of the analysis of the trial every night.

The latest celebrity to fall under the baleful eye of the media

and its info-journalistic feeding frenzy is, of course, Hugh Grant.

For those of you who reflexively avoid television shows such as "Hard Copy," "Inside Edition" and "American Journal," he is the actor who was arrested last week for soliciting a prostitute on Hollywood Boulevard.

Whether this story is newsworthy is obviously a secondary consideration to the media. That the American people will perceive the tale as fascinating is the main criteria.

But wait, this sudden burst of illuminating notoriety does not have to be limited solely to the rich and famous.

Those average folks who manage to do something so heinous, lewd, or odd as to place themselves a notch above the daily mire of violence that goes on in this country can sometimes guarantee themselves at least 15 minutes of fame.

Who doesn't remember Lorena Bobbitt, the knife-wielding battered wife who chopped off the penis of the husband whom she accused of raping her? She has assured herself of a spot in the lexicon of every well-in-

formed American, along with such notables as Joey Buttafuoco and the Menendez brothers.

All of these people are good representatives of the common man, with the exception being that they managed to involve themselves in situations involving large amounts of sex and violence. It was this sex and violence, combined in just the right manner, that catapulted them into the minds of the nation for a brief instant.

Are the American people really this stupid? The average American's life is so devoid of meaning that the only manner in which they can be assured that they are actually alive is to live vicariously through the tragic and exciting lives of famous people.

This could be merely an erroneous perception on the part of the media. Do Americans really consider the important news topics to be the ones that deal with politics, religion, art, literature and the law? Because these topics require some thinking and will actually have a direct influence on their lives.

Judging from the guests on afternoon talk shows and the attention paid to Michael Jackson and Priscilla Presley's marriage, it appears that the media has the American people pegged just right. Each week we flock to the

strange and the titillating, while forgetting that next week we will have forgotten who or what was involved in these events.

Another distressing trend is the slow seep of sensationalism from the tabloids and info-journalist shows into the more legitimate news institutions.

The major networks now run features on topics that once were considered unworthy of serious news shows.

Hopefully, a sizeable percentage of the populace still doesn't care who Tonya Harding is or what she and her band of merry men did to Nancy Kerrigan's knee.

Hopefully, the muck will not be covered so much by the junk media that it infiltrates all corners of the media and we forget completely what it is: And what it is is mindless junk.

I would hate to see the Wall Street Journal run a front page story on John Bobbitt and his porn movie acting career. And it would kill me to see the two girls from "Big Butt" and "Juggs" on the "McLaughlin Group," debating with each other the relative merits of their various large body parts.

How would the poor host keep any sort of order? And where the hell would he sit?

Chris Stidvent is senior philosophy major



MAIL CALL

PTTS should better plan construction

On June 26, the PTTS began closing the student parking lot adjacent to Zachry. This lot will be virtually inaccessible to students through July 24, a period of more than four weeks.

I purchased my parking permit for the summer believing that I would have access to the lot during the entire term. Only after the term was well underway were notices put up to the contrary. These notices detail our "substitute" lots as Kyle Field and fish lot, both on the other side of campus.

This is not the first time the PTTS has inconvenienced students. In '93-'94, it decided to repave the Northside student on-campus lot adjacent to the dorms. Their timing? The week after returning from Christmas break.

Why can't PTTS learn to quit inconveniencing students and do lot construction during the break periods?

There is Christmas break, Spring break, and 2 summer break periods in which they could get their work done.

This construction is not treating students fairly in any manner whatsoever.

Steve Riley
Class of '95

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