

History books fail to make the grade

Students in the public school system are being robbed by an absurd campaign of "political correctness." And although the concept was well-intentioned in its formative years, it has proven disastrous when applied to the pages of state-adopted textbooks.

One merely has to examine the revised history texts being used in classrooms across the state to understand why many of these guides to yesteryear are simply failing to make the grade.

In one approved Texas history book, the space devoted to slavery has been reduced to a handful of paragraphs to make room for topics such as Jewish women.

Of course, including the contributions of various groups is a noble endeavor. But should students be expected to believe that two paragraphs are all that is necessary to discuss slavery and its impact on American society? This issue is not even debatable — the answer is no.

But the manner in which slavery was presented in classrooms prior to this mad emerald embrace of political correctness was equally unworthy of accolades.

Students were subjected to the notion of ruthless Europeans raiding peaceful African villages and shackling the inhabitants into an existence of enslavement.

And the long-discredited "merrie Africa" theory was used to promote the continent as a place where relatively uncivilized people lived in harmony with nature — and each other.

But much of this is simply false, and the decision to abandon these myths was long overdue.

Unfortunately, political correctness dictated the virtual deletion of such "divisive" issues. But ignoring the topic of slavery instead of exposing its many facets only perpetuates misconceptions.

Indisputable evidence has shown the existence of rather advanced African city-states and empires that actively participated in the continental and Indian trade routes.

Although dissimilar from slavery in the New World, Africa was also host to its own form of slavery long before the first Europeans arrived. And it was many of these captives who were sold to European slave traders. Yet, such a fact can't be found in most texts.



The historian John Thornton argues in his book, *Africa and the Africans*, that "Europeans did not possess the military power to force Africans to participate in any type of trade in which [African] leaders did not wish to engage. Therefore, all African trade with the Atlantic, including the slave trade, had to be voluntary."

Thornton goes on to write that much of the "sale of slaves was under the control of African states and elites." Admittedly, it is unlikely that African leaders realized that their lust for European luxury items led to such a brutal existence for so many in the New World, but such findings should no longer be ignored by the public schools.

Secondary school textbooks have also failed to mention there were actually slaveholding blacks in the antebellum South. And although such instances were few, the book *Black Masters* details one such family. Although it is a college-level supplement, such information deserves to be included in classroom discussions.

History, like any other subject, cannot afford to be viewed with blinders.

And the mere handful of paragraphs devoted to the development and maintenance of the South's "peculiar institution" is unacceptable. But the manner in which such topics were formerly presented is to be equally abhorred.

The time has come for the textbooks used in public schools to print the truth. Students should be given the opportunity to see the past in its entirety, while misguided revisionism is deleted. Unfortunately, such a notion is politically incorrect.

In one approved Texas history book, the space devoted to slavery has been reduced to a handful of paragraphs.

Columnist



Michael Heinroth
 Teaching certification student

Batting average of alcoholics decreases

In a country in which it is often easier to cry foul than to take responsibility for one's actions, smokers and alcoholics must finally pay up.

The United Network for Organ Sharing, which governs nationwide transplant policy, approved a decision Thursday giving top priority for transplants to recipients with the best chance of survival.

This decision has been long in coming, and it is about time that those who abuse alcohol aren't rewarded with a second chance to continue destroying their lives.

It is ironic that suicide is still illegal in our country, yet those who are committing a slow form of suicide were practically prevented from dying. They received organ transplants while countless others waited for a deserved second chance.

Taxpayers should be fed up with funding health care for those who have abused their bodies for years. Although little has yet been done by the government to make drug and alcohol abusers responsible for paying for their health care, the decision is indirectly the first step in making them responsible for their actions.

Previously, the agency gave preferential treatment to those who were expected to die within seven days, in spite of the fact that many in need of immediate transplants were alcohol and drug abusers.

Celebrities such as baseball player Mickey Mantle and *Dallas* star Larry Hagman are prime examples of those who received liver transplants for all the wrong reasons.

It is unacceptable that Mantle, infamous for alcohol abuse, should jet on up to the top of the recipient list when his need for an organ transplant could have been eliminated with a little self-control. Mantle died two months after his transplant, robbing someone else of the chance to live, providing one example of why scarce organs shouldn't be wasted

Opinion Editor



Heather Pace
 Sophomore English major

on those whose problem is unfortunately not so scarce.

Alcoholics currently receive about 20 percent of all liver transplants, but they shouldn't receive transplants at all. The gift of life is too valuable to be handed to those who have taken so much for granted.

Fortunately, livers will now be given to people with acute liver problems — those who have suddenly developed liver problems — because, historically, they have the best chance of surviving.

Although the agency clearly stated that its decision was not based on any moral beliefs, indirectly it does have moral ramifications. However, the decision was correctly made only to ensure that a rare commodity is used most effectively.

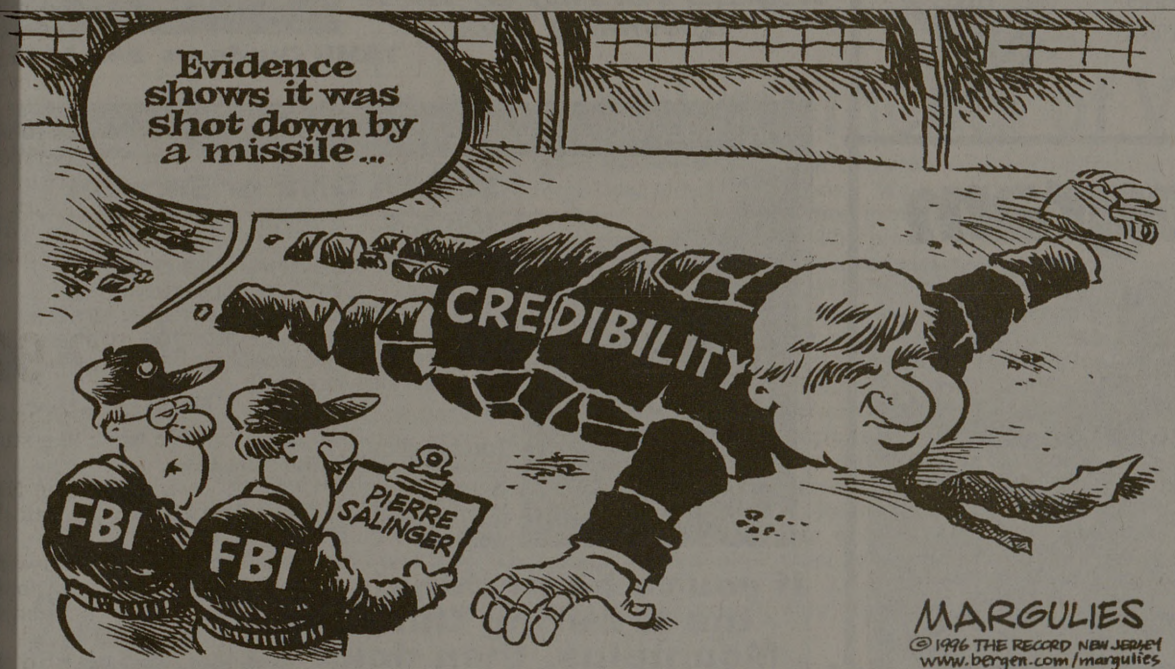
The agency should not only be commended for aiding those who have the best chance of living, but for omitting morality from the decision-making process.

Although alcoholics should not receive liver transplants, agencies should not be prejudiced toward certain groups of people, but should look at all objectively to ensure that the ultimate goal of extending life is best provided.

The fact that patients who have viral hepatitis and genetic liver diseases, previously receiving transplants the fastest, will no longer receive preference demonstrates that the agency is not making a moral decision.

The decision, which has tragic consequences for those with genetic liver diseases, was made to give a second chance to those who have the best chance to live, therefore achieving the agency's goal. Because eight to 10 people die each day waiting for transplants, it is imperative that organs are not wasted — especially when only 3,922 of those on a 7,200-person long waiting list received transplants last year.

The agency's decision is a necessary step in the right direction to helping those who help themselves, and not to another round of drinks.



Editorial Roundup

(AP) — The following is a sampling of editorial opinion from Texas newspapers:

Austin American-Statesman on prescribing marijuana:
 A version of California's recently approved Proposition 215 that legalizes marijuana for medical purposes is possibly headed for a vote in San Marcos.

Harvey Ginsburg, a professor of psychology at Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos, is heading a petition drive to get enough signatures to force a May vote on a marijuana initiative.

Ginsburg has said the initiative would not legalize pot but direct police to "minimize the impact of marijuana laws" on those who use it for medical purposes.

The petition specifies six medical conditions said to be relieved by marijuana: AIDS, cancer, glaucoma, chronic pain, seizure disorders and multiple sclerosis.

On its face, the issue of medical uses for marijuana seems

straightforward enough.

Marijuana should be treated as any other drug prescribed by a physician for relief of a medical condition. The problem is that growing and harvesting marijuana still is illegal.

So approving its medicinal use is legalizing the use of a product that is still unlawful to produce. ...

This seems a perfect situation for the medical establishment, state legislatures and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to resolve.

Allow government production of a small amount of marijuana to be prescribed by physicians, a situation that already exists for cocaine. ...

This would deflate the drive toward legalization of marijuana while making it available to patients whose doctors prescribe it for relief.

Fort Worth Star-Telegram on prison loophole:

Attorney General Dan Morales has sealed a potential loophole

that could have allowed convicted child molesters to slip prematurely out of prison.

The attorney general's opinion, issued last week, concluded that the Legislature had intended to prevent convicted child molesters from accruing "good time" credit toward release on parole.

Revisions to the state penal code in 1991 tightened the rules for early release of violent offenders but inadvertently eliminated the offense of indecency with a child from the list.

Without Morales' ruling, about 60 inmates convicted of indecency with a child could have been released automatically.

The opinion, however, indicated that two other sections of the legislation clearly intended for the offense to be included in the nonrelease category.

In case any questions should linger in the minds of creative writers now behind prison walls, the Legislature should close the loophole by statute when it convenes in January.



MAIL CALL

Prejudice displayed every day by Aggies

Regarding Aja Henderson's Nov. 13 column, "Sul Ross rededication sullies A&M":

I would like to commend Henderson for once again writing a terrific column that pointed out one of the biggest problems at this University.

This problem was best stated in the Nov. 13 Mail Call written by the E-Walk Chair in reference to the recent T-Shirt controversy.

In the letter, the Chair explained that the council was just "not as sensitive to the issue ..." This insensitivity to different races is displayed every day by Aggies all over campus.

If students don't think that this insensitivity exists, I encourage them to think about it the next time they sport Dixie Cafe T-shirts or pass a Confederate flag proudly displayed in a dorm window. Students should ask themselves how they would feel if the tables had been turned 135 years ago.

Perhaps then they will understand how African-American students feel every time they pass the statue of our beloved Sul Ross.

Amy Gearhart
 Class of '97

Headline wrongly suggestive of Islam

Regarding the Nov. 15 article, "Bosnia commitment may extend": As I read Friday's article regarding Bosnia, I noticed the sec-

ondary headline: "Muslim weapons ceased."

Being a Muslim myself, I asked myself why the article referred to the religion of the guilty party rather than its ethnicity. It occurred to me that this is a relentless cycle in the media.

Lately, it seems that whenever something bad happens and the word "Muslim" is somehow connected, the media emphasizes that fact.

It is this sort of manipulation that gives some people the misconception that Islam is a religion based on violence.

Islam is another religion, just like Christianity or Judaism and, like every religion, there are extremists.

Beliefs can become dangerous if taken too far.

The Bosnians may be wrong in their attempt to arm themselves, but after what they have been through, I do not blame them.

All I ask is that people be more open-minded and see past such misleading headlines in the news.

Majed Azouqah
 Class of '00

Battalion editorial hypocritical in logic

Regarding the Nov. 14 editorial, "Thinking smart":

The opinion page is for opinions; however, The Battalion should remember that it is for both the opinions of the columnists and of those responding to them.

The statement, "Instead of dealing with the fact that some-

one may have a different view, some readers have opted for the time-tested defense not uncommon among grade schoolers: "You don't know what you're talking about and you're just trying to make me mad," in reference to reader responses to opinions is itself as narrow-minded as the editorial accuses students of being.

According to The Battalion, students should just accept, without reservations, the expressed viewpoints just because they are different — even if they are obviously flawed.

This contradicts the closing statement about the First Amendment — perhaps The Battalion should deal reasonably with our opinions rather than be insecure about being criticized or proven wrong.

When I respond to a column I disagree with, I back my opinions up with research.

Many columns I have responded to have no basis in fact. They are emotional opinions and are often as childish as the editorial accuse reader responses of being.

The Battalion should think smart and use an open mind when dealing with the opinion page — in other words, it should follow its own advice.

David Webb
 Graduate Student

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or fewer 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 013 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

The Battalion - Mail Call
 013 Reed McDonald
 Texas A&M University
 College Station, TX
 77843-1111

Campus Mail: 1111
 Fax: (409) 845-2647
 E-mail: Batt@tamvnl.tamu.edu

For more details on letter policy, please call 845-3313 and direct your question to the opinion editor.