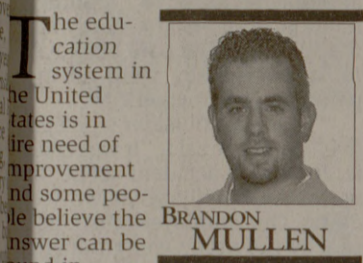


The choice of a new generation?

School voucher not good idea for education



BRANDON MULLEN

The education system in the United States is in dire need of improvement and some people believe the answer can be found in school vouchers.

School vouchers would give parents the money to choose whether their children go to public school or private school.

The argument in favor of a voucher system rests on the theory that vouchers would improve the current education system by improving learning, increasing the options for poor families and creating a system of "parent's choice."

These benefits exist only in theory. In reality, school vouchers would further damage an already weak education system.

The National Education Association (NEA) is a major opponent to the voucher system and cites a number of reasons and examples why vouchers would fail.

One reason is vouchers would not improve the education students receive. The NEA used Milwaukee, Wis., to support their argument. Milwaukee has been using a voucher system for the past six years.

Research has shown that during that period there has not been any change in the academic level of students using the vouchers in comparison to students in the public school system.

Not only does a voucher system help students, it widens the educational gap that already exists. As the NEA put it, "Vouchers would help the law at the expense of the many and take America back to the days of separate and unequal."

Evidence of this effect can be seen in the education systems of Great Britain, Chile and the Netherlands. According to the NEA, the voucher system in these countries has "widened the educational gap between the children of the well-off and the children of the poor."

After many years of working to level the educational playing field, it would not be reasonable to institute a system that would work against this progress.



GABRIEL RUENES/THE BATTALION

And a voucher system in the U.S. would hurt the students who need the most help.

Despite the claims of "parent's choice," the ultimate choice belongs to the admissions department of the private schools.

NEA President Bob Chase said, "No voucher system guarantees that every child who applies will be selected to attend the private school."

It is unreasonable to expect prestigious private schools to admit students who do not fit their status quo.

Private religious schools already reject two-thirds of their applicants. The NEA states that "the ablest, easiest to educate

students would use vouchers to attend private school. More difficult and expensive to educate children would be left in public school with even fewer advocates and resources."

In addition to admissions criteria, Chase also said, "No voucher system covers total tuition costs."

Those students who are below the poverty line would still not be able to afford a private education. Therefore most of the vouchers would be used by students who currently attend private schools.

The NEA estimates "[it] would cost \$5.2 billion a year in additional tax spending to provide vouchers for the stu-

dents already in private schools."

This twisted Robin Hood system that gives back to the rich is un-American. The additional tax money should be focused on improving the education of those students who are forced to accept public schooling.

School vouchers should not even be an issue. The American public has repeatedly voted vouchers system down across the country. And the two current systems in Milwaukee and Cleveland were passed by the state legislature, not by the public.

Ultimately the education system in the United States needs to be over-hauled. The current system does not provide the

level of academic excellence that should be expected. It also has no way to guarantee that schools in one state are competitive with schools in another. So a student's education in Paducah, Ken. may not be equal to a student's in Plano, Tex.

But those who believe a voucher system would help are mistaken. A voucher system in the United States would only intensify the current problems. It would not improve education. It would only provide opportunities. It would only benefit the students who do not need any assistance.

Brandon Mullen is a senior history and English major.

Meat industry, USDA should maintain stricter sanitary rules

A little girl lies on a bed, weak and tired. She cannot stop throwing up. Her stomach hurts, and her family can only watch as she swiftly wastes away in front of their eyes.



LISA FOOX

Does she have AIDS or cancer? No, the disease is a much more insidious one and it is carried by the food American society is consuming. It is E-coli poisoning.

The meat industry and its cohorts — the poultry and fish industries — need to clean up their acts and clean up Americans' food.

While one little girl dying is a tragedy, few people might really take note. However, when the figures in question become large, the question becomes more serious.

In *Spoiled: What is Happening to Our Food Supply and Why We are Increasingly at Risk*, the author, Nicols Fox, notes that between 200 and 500 people die every year from E-coli poisoning alone. Most of these people are children.

E-coli is a nasty disease that, in some instances, attacks the body, ravages it and is capable of eating away a person's heart.

But it is not the only food-

borne illness that exists. There are a variety, including salmonella and mad cows' disease.

Most of these diseases flourish due to a combination of dirty, diseased animals being sold to slaughterhouses, the meat not being cooked properly and the efficient but unsanitary conditions that exist in the food industries, Fox said.

The conditions that lead to people dying from these diseases are not difficult to find or hard to imagine. For instance:

An animal gets sick, but instead of being killed, the animal gets sold as food for the unknowing masses.

"Consumers are endangering their lives when they go out to eat and they should take precautions."

The conditions in the slaughterhouses are hardly pure and sanitary, despite check-ups by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Perhaps it is wise to ask how a government agency could allow the unsanitary conditions that lead to death to continue in the food industries.

Robin Cook, a graduate of Co-

lumbia University Medical School and a fiction writer, claimed the USDA and the meat-packing industry are allies in the struggle to keep the public unaware.

He said that the USDA officials overlook many of the disgusting things that happen to the meat on the way to the food market.

The meat could be dropped on the floor amidst the blood and other body fluids from the cows and steers. It could be diseased to start with, something officials are supposed to inspect, but perhaps overlook.

Regardless, it is obvious that the USDA needs to take stronger action. In the mean time, consumers are endangering their lives when they go out to eat and they should take precautions.

Some might choose not to order meat at all when dining at restaurants. A less drastic measure might be to make sure the food is cooked properly and is not served cold, which should eliminate some of the risk.

But more importantly, something needs to be done to stop these murders. For these deaths are deaths — people dying due to the carelessness and greed of others. Society needs to be more aware of the little girl, lying on her bed, swiftly dying.

Lisa Foox is a senior journalism major.

Kazan's award will not erase pain, rift caused in Hollywood

"I thought the blacklist was Hattie McDaniel and me." Whoopi Goldberg's quip may have garnered a few laughs at Sunday's Oscar ceremony, but the story behind the joke is no laughing matter.



AARON MEIER

The honorary Oscar presentation is usually a time for audiences to head to the bathroom or raid the refrigerator before the announcement of Best Picture. This year, however, the biggest question was not "Shakespeare or Private Ryan?" it was "Will they or won't they applaud for Elia Kazan?"

Kazan, director of such cinematic wonders as *On the Waterfront* and *Streetcar Named Desire*, was selected by the Academy to receive an honorary Oscar for lifetime achievement.

The trouble is in the '50s, Kazan "named names" to the House on Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) chaired by the infamous Sen. Joe McCarthy.

The Academy has handed its highest honor to a coward and thereby soiled the award's integrity.

Kazan is the Linda Tripp of the Cold War era — a person who sold out friends and colleagues for the sake of patriotism. With the clear liberal tendencies of the movie industry,

Kazan naming names was like shooting fish in a barrel.

Whether or not the people Kazan identified as members of the Communist Party truly were communists has never been the issue. Simply being named by a person who testified in front of HUAC ended the careers of many of Hollywood's top creative minds.

In Kazan's attempt to save the country from what many believed was an international communist conspiracy, he sold out one of the basic principles of this country and the artistic community as a whole: the freedom of thought.

Whether communism was bent on global domination is not the issue. The idea that promising careers could be ended just because one man suspected another of communist leanings is a travesty to the justice system of this country.

Guilty by Suspicion is more than a phrase to describe the McCarthy era. It is also a movie starring Robert DeNiro, one of the presenters of the honorary Oscar to Kazan. The movie depicts DeNiro's character facing charges of communist association.

Even though DeNiro is a friend of Kazan and owes much of his early beginnings to the director, how easily DeNiro abandoned the ideals extolled in the film.

The other presenter of the Oscar, Martin Scorsese, director of such films as *Raging Bull* and

Good Fellas, also followed the path of hypocrisy DeNiro walks. Scorsese is a rabid proponent of the exiled Dali Lama of Tibet.

The Lama was forced out of Tibet by the Chinese government because his Buddhist beliefs did not comply with the communist government, a story eerily reminiscent of McCarthy-era politics where communist beliefs no in line with the American government were forced out of their jobs.

During Sunday's telecast of the Oscars, the camera intentionally showed images of stars such as Ed Harris and Nick Nolte sitting with their arms folded across their chests staring at Kazan in defiance, while other stars such as Helen Hunt tried to offer the director a standing ovation. However, no matter what the people at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion may have tried to do, whether it be an organize silent or a verbal protest, it will not make up for the lives Kazan ruined.

The blacklisted men and women had their lives taken away from them and most were never able to recover. So while Kazan stood on stage accepting an award, people whose lives he had ruined know that they have been slapped in the face twice, once by Kazan and another time by the members of the Academy who gave the Oscar to a coward.

Aaron Meier is a senior political science major.