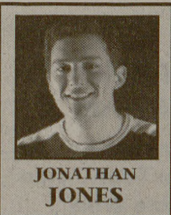


OPINION

THE BATTALION

The Learning Channel

Would televising McVeigh's execution be a teaching tool or unneeded violence?



JONATHAN JONES

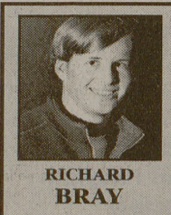
For victims, support for families of the deceased and contributions to the memorial in Oklahoma City. More important to those whose lives were not directly touched by the tragedy, a pay-per-view execution offers the chance for a more informed opinion on the death penalty.

The death penalty is one of the most controversial issues in the United States, yet very few ever have witnessed an execution. Given the violent and barbaric nature of entertainment, people should be able to handle this reality. Veteran newsman Mike Wal-

into a death-penalty opponent. Before any opinion is finalized, the opportunity to see what takes place should be available to the public. A truly informed and well-thought-out opinion on capital punishment cannot be complete without firsthand experience of this process.

If anyone deserves to die for crimes, it is Timothy McVeigh. His case presents a unique opportunity to send the message that terrorism on American soil will be severely punished. A pay-per-view execution may appear barbaric, but there is an up-

Timothy McVeigh killed 168 people and injured 500 more when he obliterated the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City with a 2,000-pound fertilizer bomb on April 19, 1995. He is scheduled to become the first federal inmate executed since 1963 but the most unusual thing about McVeigh's scheduled execution on May 16 is that he wants his execution to be nationally broadcast. This is a horrific idea that should not be allowed. McVeigh's crime was the largest act of ter-



RICHARD BRAY

rorism ever committed on U.S. soil. He killed 168 people, including 19 children, in a matter of seconds.

It is impossible for McVeigh's execution to be witnessed by all 250 of the survivors and family members of the deceased who wish to be present. Officials are considering broadcasting the execution on a closed-circuit telecast that will be available only to survivors and relatives of the deceased.

A similar technique was used to allow victims to watch McVeigh's Denver trial in an auditorium in Oklahoma City. McVeigh, in a letter published by The Sun-

day Oklahoma, asked that his execution be nationally televised. "It has ... been said that all of Oklahoma was a victim of the bombing. Can all of Oklahoma watch?" he asked in the letter.

The idea of televising an execution is not new. In 1994, former talk-show host Phil Donahue tried to get permission to televise the execution of murderer David Lawson but was denied by the North Carolina Supreme Court and the U.S. Supreme Court.

McVeigh's attorney Rob Nigh Jr. said McVeigh will not make a legal push for a public execution, but Nigh said he supports the idea. "If it is our collective judgment that capital punishment is a reasonable response to crime, we need to come to grips with what it actually is," he said.

That is true. Perhaps it would be more difficult for Americans to support the death penalty if they had to see a man murdered by the federal government. This course of action, however, is a bit extreme. The violence portrayed on television, which has already angered parents groups and other activists concerned about the effects of violence on children, is nothing compared to watching an actual human being die.

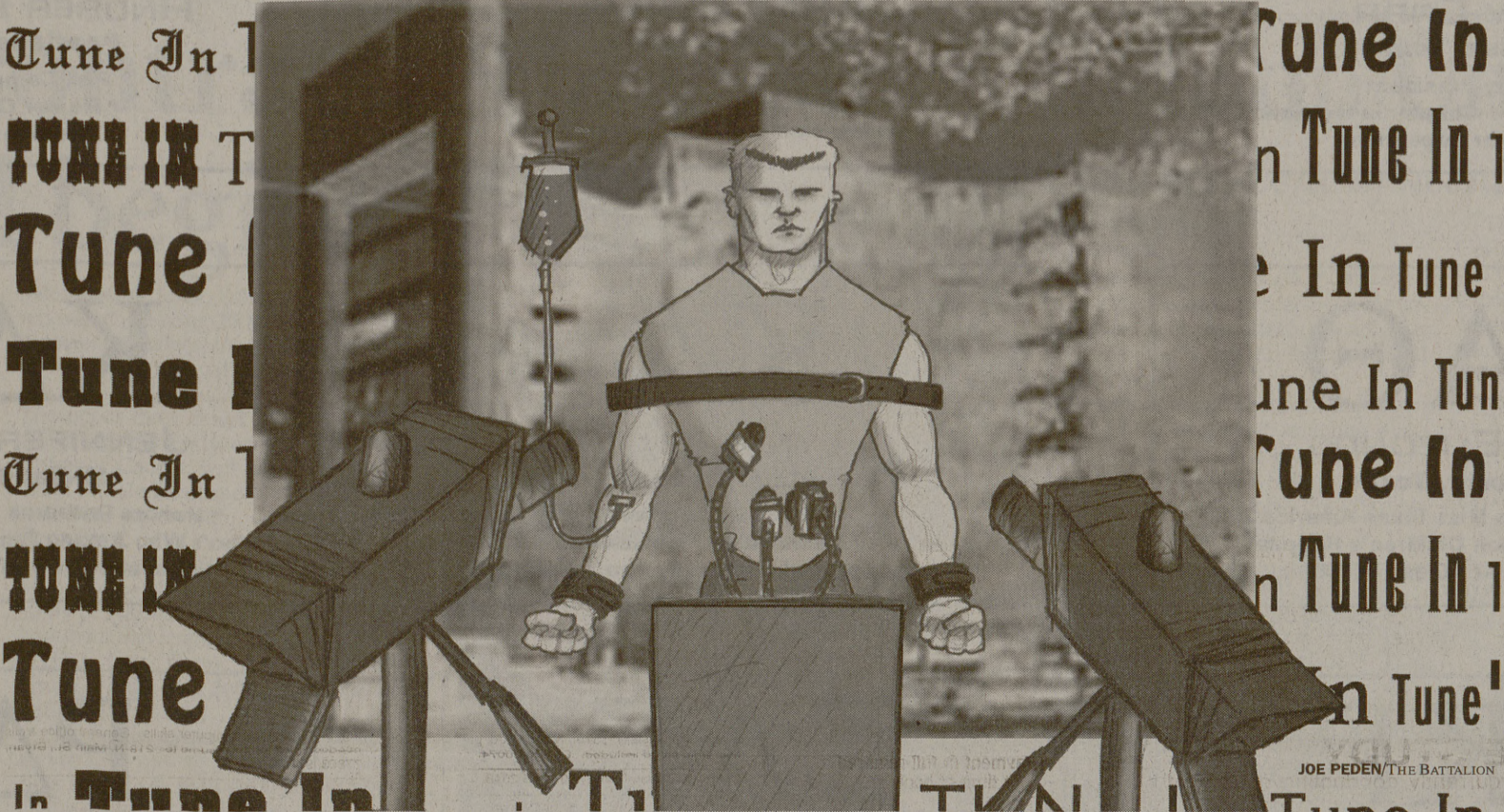
After McVeigh has been given his lethal injection and the drugs take their course, there will be no director to yell "Cut!" The potential effects of a nationally broadcast execution on children far outweigh the wishes of a mass murderer.

The idea itself is similar to the days of the Old West, when families used to bring picnic baskets so they would have something to eat as they watched public hangings. That spectacle was done away with long ago and should not return. For anyone besides the families of the victims and the survivors to watch McVeigh's execution is nothing more than blood lust.

Executions do not belong on television where they can be seen by children. While it could affect the public's view on capital punishment, the risks are too great for McVeigh's execution to be broadcast to a wide audience. McVeigh's execution does not meet the decency standards expected from television.

Richard Bray is a sophomore journalism major.

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JOE PEDEN/THE BATTALION

place of 60 Minutes said, "We are told it's too grisly. The fact of the matter is, we've been brought up on a diet of televised gore, in which we routinely see people being killed. If the death penalty is supposed to be a deterrent, the impact of seeing what happens when an individual is electrocuted, or gassed, or injected or even hanged would be even more considerable than just plain talking about it."

Perhaps witnessing someone die would turn a death-penalty advocate

side. Besides generating revenue, this proposed public execution is an educational opportunity. Also, restricting what news can be broadcast over the airwaves is contrary to the First Amendment.

Should a broadcaster who wants to televise an execution be censored? Broadcasting an execution, even to those who choose to receive it, is a difficult issue, but it should be given a try.

Jonathan Jones is a junior political science major.

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Mail Call

Confederate flag is symbol of history

In reference to Dr. John Robertson's comment "The Confederate battle flag is wrong symbol for the university."

I have a question for Dr. Robertson: Is exactly the right symbol for our university? The Confederate flag is a symbol of pride that took place in the very region where our University stands today. I understand that some may misinterpret the flag as a symbol of racism. However, there are many of us who have ancestors who fought and died for this flag of which we speak. Why must we bring down a symbol of history because people are too ignorant to do a little research and find

out more about what the flag might symbolize and what other issues the Confederacy fought for?

Nevertheless, people don't, and time and time again the issue is racism and slavery. By bringing down the picture of one of the former president's of A&M because he had one of his "heroes" in the background is a prime example of the ignorance so many Americans share. There are many symbols around A&M that may be linked to the Civil War and the Confederate South. In fact, some of the founders and first presidents of this University were involved in the Civil War, so I guess we should just shut down the entire University, because we are a "wrong" symbol for the rest of the United States.

Tyler Dunham
Class of '03

University diversification will not be achieved with use of affirmative action

University administrators across the country are feeling pressured to take action as the U.S. population continues to diversify, yet many campus demographics remain predominantly white.

Administrators are defending the idea that affirmative action may add diversity in color but offer little substance.

At the center of the diversity issue are affirmative-action cases in Texas, Michigan, California, Georgia and Washington.

The Center for Individual Rights, a conservative legal organization, filed an appeal Feb. 20 challenging Michigan's affirmative action policy. A district court upheld Michigan's current policy. This is the latest battle in the fight to end the unjust practice of race-based admissions.

If the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals overturns the decision, it will add weight to the precedent that affirmative action is unconstitutional.

Affirmative action seeks to increase diversity by singling out minority students and admitting them over students with similar qualifications. While the concept has good intentions, it screams "racism." Minorities should not be singled out because of their race for any reason. Race-based admissions go against the idea of equality for all Americans.

Instead of fighting a losing battle, universities should expend efforts to create fair programs to diversify their campuses. Diversity

can be achieved without affirmative action.

First, University officials should define diversity and set their goals accordingly. A realistic expectation would be for campus diversity to reflect that state's demographics.

The value of a diverse campus is uncontested. However, there is a difference between admitting students based on their race and admitting those same students because of the diversity they would share through their experience as a minority. Arguing the difference between one's race and one's experience

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ences related to race may seem philosophical, but they are indeed separate. Diversity is more than skin deep.

Universities need to show more commitment to diversity on campuses. They are concerned with bringing in more minorities, but have relatively few programs that allow students to interact. At Texas A&M, countless programs advertise diversity on campus.

Unfortunately, those programs do not reach out to others. A good example of exposure to diversity are the International Week booths in the main hallway of the Memorial Student Center. Diverse programs that do not reach out to others accomplish nothing. There is no point in diversification if there will be no interaction.

In Texas, A&M and the University of Texas are slowly reaching pre-Hopwood minority numbers. The steady increases are a

direct result of creative programs to enroll minority students.

UT president Larry Faulkner has begun taking trips to predominantly Hispanic and black high schools to show his interest in having the students apply to his school. A&M has significantly increased the number of scholarships available to minority students. This is evidence that diversity is achievable without discrimination.

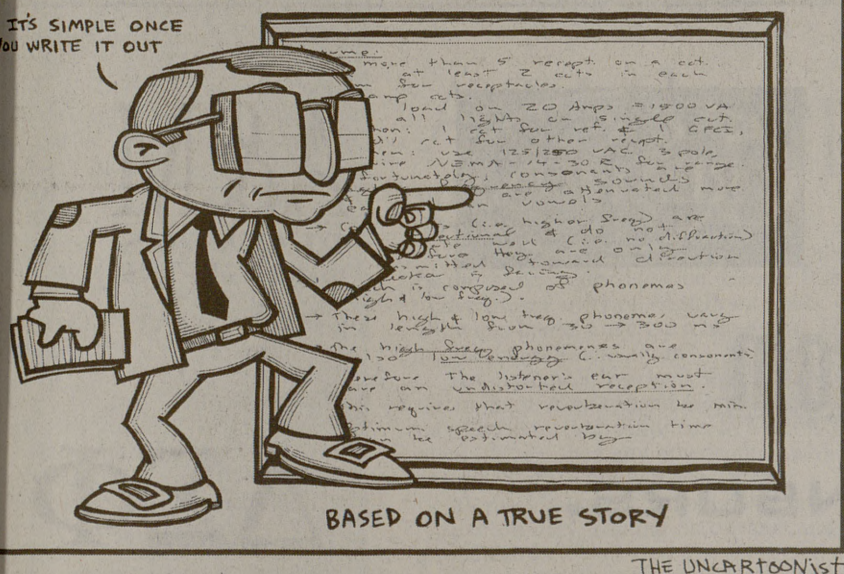
Finally, it is time to realize that the problems facing minorities entering higher education have deeper roots than entrance requirements. Unfortunately, affirmative action covers up other problems. If the admissions bar is even for all applicants regardless of race, and a significant number of minorities are not admitted, two conclusions can be drawn.

Either minorities are naturally not as intelligent as whites, or the problem lies elsewhere. One would be ignorant to believe the first conclusion, so it is likely that the diversity issue can be tackled from other angles. It may be a pre-college education problem if minorities are not competing as well at college admissions. If the focus turns to answering the question of why minority students are not as likely to get admitted to universities, the true problem can be discovered and addressed.

Universities should be commended for their commitment to diversifying their student bodies. However, the commitment does not justify the artificial diversity that affirmative action creates.

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ARTOON OF THE DAY



THE UNCARTOONIST