

Opinion

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THE BATTALION

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Closed book of educational opportunity

Members of community wrong to allow politics to keep a library shut down

By blocking funds, they are creating a racial rift and keeping America's youth from having an equal opportunity to excel.

A controversy has arisen within the community of Savannah, Ga. An anonymous philanthropist offered as much as \$1 million to reopen the historical Carnegie Library with the stipulation that all or part of the library would be named for the central Supreme Court Justice Felix was Clarence Thomas.



THOMAS CAMPBELL

Some citizens want to lock this money and the threat only to the opening of the library because of differences in opinion with Thomas. However, the needs of the children in this community would take precedent over personal politics. What these children need is to have a library open and available to them.

The Carnegie Library was started in 1906 by even African-American citizens whose children were not able to use the white libraries. They donated books and magazines from their homes. In 1914, Andrew Carnegie's foundation donated all the money needed to build a new building and stock it with books and magazines. Since then, the library has been used by hundreds of thousands of people over the years, including a young man named Clarence Thomas. In 1997, the Carnegie Library had fallen into such disrepair that it had to be closed. Thomas does not believe in some social programs such as affirmative action, which some members of the Savannah community believe is essential. Library board member Robert Brooks was the most vocal member of the opposition to receiving money to reopening the library. "Clarence Thomas has never cared anything about the black folks and he made that very clear to us," Brooks said. "He looks upon his race as Hitler looked upon the Jews and I the 1960s to tell him Judas because he sold his people out."

Citizens for Library Preservation founder Gary Johnson believes that Brooks needs to place his money where his mouth is. "If they want to get mad about Clarence Thomas, then they need to come up with the money."

W. John Mitchell, a member of the library steering committee, agrees that opening the library for the children is the most important thing. "I'm not crazy about Clarence Thomas' politics, but politics pale in comparison to what

this money could do for the children of this community and the community as a whole." Clarence Thomas said he was inspired by looking at the paintings of prominent black leaders of the past like Booker T. Washington, and striving to better himself in that library. Is having the name of someone whose politics you do not agree with more important than the future of your kids? In a perfect world, no one would place politics over the needs of the children—they are America's future.

Because Brooks and his supporters use their influence to keep a library from opening, they have not only hurt the community, but America as a whole. He is promoting racial division by calling the Carnegie Library a "black library." Brooks has only promoted more racial strife by his inflammatory comments about Clarence Thomas.

Brooks has gone as far as saying that "the founders of the Carnegie would jump up in their graves and dance in hell's fire for the rest of eternity in preference to having Justice Thomas' name attached to anything or any part of something so dear and costly." The founders of the Carnegie Library, including Andrew Carnegie, would want nothing more than to allow children of any race to become educated. His comments do nothing to serve the community. And unfortunately, do even less to help the children.

Andrew Carnegie spent much of his hard-earned fortune to open libraries across the country. He did that so children everywhere would be able to become educated and promote a better tomorrow. If that library is closed one day longer than it has to be, then the memory of Andrew Carnegie and the eleven people who worked to open the library will be desecrated.

Unfortunately, members of the Savannah community have not only disrespected Justice Thomas, but they have also ruined the meaning of the library. It should be reopened so that some underprivileged children will have an equal opportunity to learn. By blocking funds, they are creating a racial rift and keeping America's youth from having an equal opportunity to excel.

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REMEMBER THIS GENERATION

Result of retaliation today is ours to inherit tomorrow

The evil acts of terror last Tuesday are a defining moment for our generation. Much like the Kennedy assassination was for our parents, students across campus and the nation will vividly remember where they were when news of the events first reached them. The emotions of the aftermath that are sometimes so difficult to express. As a war seems inevitable, likely there will be more anger and frustration.

Regardless, now is the time for this generation of America's leaders to protect the center of the world's freedom and democratic ideals. We must demand that the decisions being made exude the necessary measures of justice, temperance and intelligence toward those who must be eliminated from the face of the earth. There must also be compassion toward those who are unfortunately close in proximity to the aggressors. The consequences of the actions of America's current leaders will fall upon this generation, as ours will be the one to cross the finish line of whatever initiatives are undertaken in the coming weeks and months. We must accept no less than pru-

dence and wisdom from those entrusted to protect and defend the most impressive beacon of freedom the world has ever known.

As has been stated so many times before, this is a new world: the fully justified paranoia of Israel has touched the United States. This country is, in fact, vulnerable; it is prey to the attacks of a cowardly type of warfare, one so difficult to counter. Our nation is at war against the shadowy figures of Islamic extremism. The

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implications of this for the future of the world are large and unimaginable.

Make no mistake, there are many across the globe who hate America and all that it stands for. As the conflict begins, our generation should begin to ponder the sacrifices that will be necessary. A sense of selflessness and duty to country, similar to that of the generation that conquered fas-

cism, Nazism and communism, is required to conquer a more cowardly, but no less evil and barbaric enemy.

An assault upon and extermination of Osama bin Laden is a proper start, but will not eliminate the poison he represents. The steel of America's resolve is indeed strong, and those who sponsor and support his type of heinous activity should be severely punished. The past week has seen heartening and uplifting togetherness as the American people, Congress and our allies abroad rally behind President Bush.

At the same time, the actions this government will soon undertake affect our generation the most, for we will come of age in a time dominated by unfortunate yet unavoidable suspicion directed toward our fellow man. Students should pray for and support those elected to protect their freedoms and the military prepared to defend it with their own lives. But their decisions cannot fall outside the bounds of public scrutiny. The new world that is shaped by the resolve and retaliation of today is ours to inherit tomorrow.

CARTOON OF THE DAY



THE UN-CARTOONIST ©

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