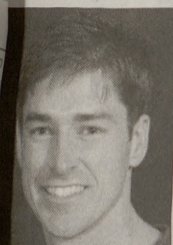


## Making a case for torture

*Finding ways around torture legislation a good move in ending war on terror*



NICHOLAS DAVIS

Information is crucial. Anyone will admit this, be it a businessman or a soldier. Successful businesses are dependent on the best information available, and wars are won in a similar fashion. This brings us to a crossroad. During a war, how far should one go to extract information from a prisoner? Is torture ever justifiable? In some cases, it is.

Recently, some documents prepared by defense department lawyers and the president's legal advisors have surfaced, instructing the president on ways to get around torture laws.

Of course, many individuals believe this is a crime against humanity and a breach of American and international law. However, torture may indeed play a key role in protecting U.S. soldiers and this nation.

Still, the Bush administration has tried to downplay and even deny that the president has ordered the use of torture.

For example, John Ashcroft, in a testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee, stated, "President Bush made no order that would require or direct the violation of either international treaties or domestic laws prohibiting torture."

Last week, however, the Wall Street Journal broke the story of a classified legal brief to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld regarding the difficulties interrogators faced in obtaining information from prisoners. The brief stated, "because the president is protecting national security, any ban on torture, even an American Law, could not be approved." Basically, this implies that the president's charter to protect national security trumps the laws of torture.

Other memorandums pertain to using harsh interrogation techniques while side-stepping the classification of torture.

One such memorandum, reported by The New York Times, claimed "a defendant is guilty of torture only if he acts with the express purpose of inflicting severe pain or suffering on a person within his control."

Bush claims he ordered interrogators to use methods compatible with international and American law, but it's obvious that a word game is being played. That is, what constitutes "severe pain" is completely circumstantial.

Most likely, Bush has stooped to playing such word games because he realizes torture is indeed useful, and in some instances necessary. Nevertheless, he also understands that many American voters live in a constant

state of idealism and naivete and would not reelect a man who advocates torture.

Unfortunately these people fail to see the big picture. Remember these "enemy combatants" fight for no national standing army and have no rights under the Geneva

Conventions. More importantly, since these individuals fight for no standing army, it is obvious they are motivated by something more than nationalism: A sick ideology inspired by a religious theology.

These terrorists believe they fight for God, so it is nearly impossible to obtain vital information quickly. After all, it's easy to squeal on your government, but not God. This is why more persuasion is needed.

The international community and many delusional people here in the United States believe that Americans should treat the terrorists held as prisoners in a humane and delicate fashion. Why is this?

The reason offered is, "If Americans torture prisoners, then the enemy will torture American POWs."

This is the most important point. Nevertheless, it fails to hold water. To explain, it seems that only Americans and their allies hold themselves to the standards of the treaties regarding prisoner treatment. Does anyone believe our soldiers held as POWs in Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War or the Iraq War were treated in such a fashion? Absolutely not.

It's terrible that torture should even be considered as an option, but Americans must ask themselves, "How much longer should this war on terror continue. How many more innocent lives need to be lost?"

Without question, torture is inhumane, but wake up. These terrorists must not be pampered. They should be so terrified when captured that they are willing to tell interrogators anything they want to know.

Admittedly, this method can be viewed as cruel, but so can suicide bombings targeting innocent civilians and children, flying airplanes into buildings or dragging the body parts of Americans down the streets of Fallujah.

The harsh truth is torture has a place in the war on terror, especially since nuclear weapons are more accessible. If prisoners are unwilling to relinquish vital information that may save a few American lives or an entire city by thwarting a nuclear attack, then our interrogators should have no reservations about starting at the prisoners' toes and working their way up.



Nicholas Davis is a senior political science major. Graphic by Will Lloyd

## Voucher system is the best solution to finance problem

*Vouchers would do away with wasteful spending*

George Washington Carver once wrote that "Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom." Because freedom is an essential principal on which America was founded, providing quality public education to this nation's children is a duty of all fifty states. The Texas Legislature and Gov. Rick Perry are still searching for key finances that will support the education of Texas' children, and a voucher system is the best answer to this problem.

Inadequate planning stalled the efforts to remove the current Robin Hood system during a special legislative session called up by Gov. Perry in late May. In the search for a new plan to guide the education system in Texas, providing more educational freedom to the parents of school children through a voucher system would end this crisis.

The current school finance problem began when the infamous Robin Hood law found its way on to Gov. Perry's chopping block. The rule came about as a result of the Texas Supreme Court case "Edgewood ISD v. Kirby." In this case, the Court decided that the differences in funding between the richest districts and the poorest violated the Texas Constitution's education clause.

Therefore, in 1993 the legislature came up with the Robin Hood plan to appease the Court. With the complete elimination of this system, other funds must be raised to keep in line with the old Court ruling.

According to the Houston Chronicle, Perry's current proposals to make up for the inequalities in funding include increasing the tax on cigarettes, allowing video slot machines to operate legally in Texas borders and taxing those that frequent "gentlemen's" clubs. Relying on people to consistently indulge their vices is never a good idea, and the idea of increasing the number of legalized gambling establishments along Texas' borders defies the traditional values of our state.

What Perry and the supporters of his plan need to realize is that Texas already has enough money to provide every single child in Texas with a decent education. The problem is the amount of money wasted in the independent districts on non-educational projects and high-paid bureaucrats who never set foot in the schools they administer.

Texas needs sweeping reform to clean up our inefficient school districts and provide quality education to every Texas student. Creating a voucher system is the best way to achieve these lofty but important goals.

In a voucher system, the revenue from property taxes will



JONATHAN SMITH

be taken up at the state level and divided evenly among all the children in Texas in the form of a voucher. This voucher follows the children to whatever school they please, even to private schools, which forces current schools to compete with each other for funding.

In this system, it doesn't matter if someone's children are in a rich district or a poor district, because all Texas children will have vouchers of the same value. In order to provide true freedom of choice, a certain portion of the voucher should be earmarked to provide funding for busing so that children are

able to get to any school they please.

Standardized test scores (an area of education where Texas already leads the nation), magnet programs, location and after-school programs would be the main criteria on which parents could base their decision on what school their child goes to. Inefficient schools will be shut down because of a lack of funding, which will fortunately push the other children who remained at that failed school into more successful ones.

The most important effect of the reform would be the disbanding of the hundreds of school boards that currently decide how the money raised for education in our state must be spent. The administration can be centralized, ending the need for Texas' taxes to be spent on hundreds of district superintendents when we only need one statewide one.

Also, parents will be given veto power over the decisions of their children's schools by controlling their purse strings. A school that spends too much money on non-educational projects will find its bottom line depleted by parents removing students from that school. Competition, the force that drives the vibrant Texas economy, is just what the doctor ordered for our ailing education system.

The debate over how to provide for quality education in Texas will heat up again in another special session or during the next legislative session which is scheduled to be in January. Any representative that fights for a voucher system will find themselves in good company: a recent poll by the Austin Chronicle indicates that 59 percent of Texans favor school choice. Hopefully, by then Perry will join these ranks and open his eyes to a voucher system — a bold plan that would prove this state's dedication to education.

Jonathan Smith is a junior history major.

### MAIL CALL

#### Blaming Muslims is 'convenient way out'

In response to David Shoemaker's June 16 column:

It seems like he puts the blame for violence in Iraq on "Fanatical Islamists" and "Baathists." Will people please wake up? I have lived in Middle East all my life and I can tell you nothing can be further from the truth.

Of course these days blaming everything on Muslims seems to be the convenient way out. Sure don't blame it on "Iraqis" even though polls show 90 percent of Iraqis view the US as an occupation force. Just blame it on "Muslims" because it won't be politically correct to say Iraqis are fighting. Saying "Iraqis" are fighting would seem like a national uprising rather than a small cult of people and of course that would not play well politically.

Sure, when Serbs kill Albanians, say "Serbs massacred Muslim Albanians," but never mention "Christian Serbs killed Muslim Albanians." Why the hypocrisy, may I ask? Clearly, Christians are not to be blamed, Serbs are. Muslims are not to be blamed likewise. If someone helps the coalition forces, they are "Pakistani" or "Iraqi," but when they go against it, they are "radical Muslims" or "Islamists." What kind of hypocrisy is this, may I dare ask?

Hassan Jaffar  
Class of 2004

#### Embryonic stem cell research problematic

In response to Mike Walters' June 16 column:

In 1988, President Reagan declared "the unalienable personhood of every American, from the moment of conception until natural death." We should remember Reagan's principles.

While it is true that stem cells exist in embryos, it often goes unmentioned that they are also found in adults, placentas, and in umbilical cord blood. It is these stem cells that provide all the promise of embryonic stem cells without the controversy.

Scientific American reported that advances in adult stem cell research showed more immediate promise than embryonic stem cell research. This is partly due to the fact that since the adult stem cells came from the patient, there is a much lower risk of the body rejecting the tissue. Furthermore, extracting stem cells from adults, placentas, and umbilical cord blood does not stop the development of a genetically unique being, as it does in the case of embryos.

To say that scientists should be able to use stem cells from embryos that would otherwise die is similar to supporting experiments on death row inmates or terminally ill patients without consent. Scientists shouldn't pursue medical advances that harm some while trying to heal others.

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