

# Death penalty unfair to disabled Americans

McCarver's execution is latest sign that the death penalty should go.

If it's the wee hours of Friday morning and you've just picked up your copy of the *Old Gold and Black*, while you're flipping through the pages to see what happened this week on campus, a mentally retarded man is likely being executed by the state of North Carolina. Ernest Paul McCarver is scheduled to be executed at 2 a.m. on Friday, March 2 at

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Central Prison in Raleigh. With an IQ of 67, McCarver is below the standard definition for mental retardation (which is an IQ of 70 or below). Though he has been found guilty of robbing and killing fellow cafeteria worker Woodrow Hartley, it is questionable what understanding this man has of his crime and of the finality of the punishment it carries. According to his lawyer, McCarver functions at the level of an eight- or ten-year-old. Marty Greer, a Raleigh lawyer who represented Virginia death row inmate Earl Washington (who was later cleared of charges by DNA evidence) said of her client who had an I.Q. of 69, "He had no conception of what it meant to be put to death." Though an individual such as McCarver may in fact be a threat to society who should be under state care, it is not just to take the life of someone who may not have understood the consequences of his actions nor the severity of the punishment. The timing of McCarver's execution is particularly significant because the State Legislature is currently considering bills to change death penalty procedures, including a ban on the death penalty for mentally retarded individuals. Though this legislation, if passed, would not be retroactive, it still illustrates that North Carolinians and their representatives are uncertain about the justice in capital sentencing. Thirteen out of 38 states that permit capital punishment have banned the execution of mentally retarded individuals; and in 1993, the North Carolina Legislature nearly passed a similar bill, but was prevented because a definition for mentally retarded could not be agreed upon. In addition to the bill to ban the use of the death penalty on defendants with an I.Q. of 70 or less, the state legislature is also considering "racial justice act" bill that allows a judge to determine whether race was not considered in death-penalty cases. A third bill before the State Legislature is

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a proposal for a temporary moratorium on the death penalty in the state until the fairness of the punishment can be evaluated. In North Carolina, 12 local governments, including the city of Winston-Salem, have adopted resolutions calling for a moratorium on executions. Additionally, a legislative study commission of the General Assembly supports legislation that combats racial bias in the death penalty and that calls for a moratorium on executions until problems in capital sentencing can be fixed.

The public, as well, is generally supportive of a moratorium on the death penalty. According to a *Charlotte Observer*-WBTV News Carolinas September 2000 poll, 60 percent of North Carolinians favor a moratorium. More than 80 percent of North Carolinians believe it is likely that there are innocent people on the state's death row (Your Voice, Your Vote, 2000).

Since December 1999, only one execution has taken place. All other cases have received stays or been commuted to life sentences because of serious problems in the trial process. However, the second execution is scheduled for this month: that of Winston-Salem native Willie Ervin Fisher. He is to be executed on March 9, just one week after McCarver is put to death.

Fisher was convicted of murder, burglary and assault charges in 1993 and sentenced to death, although he had never previously been convicted of a crime. Several aspects of his case bring into question the justice in his sentence. For example, Fisher's trial and appellate counsel suffered from acute depression and physical illness that limited his effectiveness as an attorney. He was sanctioned twice and ultimately suspended by the state bar for a pattern of misconduct and omissions with multiple clients. Additionally, there are questions of racial bias in Fisher's case. Fisher, an African American, was sentenced to death by a jury of 11 whites and one Black American. It is questionable whether Fisher received adequate council and an unbiased trial.

Thus, while two executions will take place this month there will be debate in the state legislature about the justice behind cases like those of Ernest McCarver and Willie Fisher. By adopting a state moratorium on executions North Carolina can put a stop at least temporarily to an arbitrary, unjust, inhumane and costly form of punishment.

# Education is the key to the nation's future

By compensating teachers more, the education system will vastly improve.

Education in America is a very hot topic these days. Everyone seems to have some way to fix it. The majority of the plans, both democratic and Republican, emphasize "accountability." These plans include expensive grade level testing programs, with punishment to teachers whose students literally don't make the

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grade. Some people feel that teachers with poor scores should lose their jobs, and in some states this is the case. Poor scores equal poor teaching. Sounds simple, right? Wrong.

The real problem facing education in America is the teacher shortage. There's not just a shortage in the number of teachers, but a shortage in the number of quality teachers. Simple economics state that it is more efficient to have two teachers that make the same salary as one teacher. Everyone would agree that as far as teaching goes, two is better than one. The problem is this arrangement costs our nation its experienced educators.

School systems faced with budgetary problems and rising enrollments are forced to put more bodies in classrooms. The only way that can happen is to cut the veteran teachers and bring in new ones, at lower salaries, with no real experience to back up their teaching certificates. America can't hold onto its quality educators as long as the field has no future. Once you start making money, you get fired and new people brought to your place. Shrug it off, it's just business. Unfortunately, this sense of business that has infected our school system is getting in the way of the education of our children.

The emphasis on testing is also driving veteran teachers away. In order to keep their jobs, teachers have to get the passing test scores. The only way to do that is to teach towards the test. One example I have experience with is in the state of Virginia. Virginia uses the Standards of Learning tests to determine if students have the necessary knowledge to progress and graduate. These scores are also used to determine which schools are deemed successful and worthy of additional funding. This makes very little sense. Schools that perform poorly are punished, with teachers and principals losing their jobs, and money being pulled from the school.

How can the "poor" school ever improve if its staff is in a constant rotation, and money is being diverted to other institutions? The SOL tests are infuriating to veteran teachers. The curriculum is focused completely on the test, not on what the teachers feels would best benefit the students. As a nation that emphasizes individuality and creative spirit, as positive traits, why are we turning around and forcing all out students to learn exactly the same things? There's no place in the curriculum, especially in schools that do not have good SOL scores, to help struggling students learn other ways to think about the problems or issues. All that matters is the test, and the scores on the test. Veteran teachers are leaving simply because they are not free to help students due to

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the fact that their jobs depend on passing this rote knowledge to students.

I feel very strongly that creating a national kind of SOL would negatively impact education in this country. It increases bureaucracy and decreases individual control and learning pace. I think that finding the solution to the "education problem" in America requires a much more drastic proposal. America needs more teachers. America needs better teachers. America has enough plastic surgeons and lawyers. There is no shortage in these fields, yet many intelligent people choose these careers simply because of financial aspects. Teachers don't get rich. Teachers spend their lives raising doctors and lawyers, yet can't always afford their services when needed. The government should, instead of pouring money down the black hole of testing, find some way to make teaching a financially rewarding profession. Subsidize teaching. Create a plan like the GI Bill that covers the cost of college. Do something that allows teachers to be financially secure. When choosing a career, people look for a way to make a living. There are college loans to repay, car payments, insurance and sometimes a family to start. All of these factors require more income. This leaves out the pleasures of life: vacations, eating out, driving nicer cars and owning a good home.

This leaves the choice of a life spent in debt as a teacher, or a life spent traveling to Bermuda as a doctor. Very few people will choose the former. This is our core problem. The people we need to be teachers, the people who will be accountable without testing, are the people with the drive, intelligence and skill that it takes to be a doctor. The task of helping a child learn to read takes as much skill and precision as performing a face-lift. That face lift does not do much for society, but one teacher, teaching 30 children to read every year, is an incredible benefit. Yet we as a society reward that doctor while we shake our heads in disbelief that the bright teacher chose that job over something that makes more money.

I have always wanted to enter the teaching field. My family has a background in education. Both my parents were teachers. Both of my parents loved their jobs. Both of my parents told me to do something else if I wanted to make a living to support a family.

My family vacations were to stay with relatives in Texas while my friends spend summer in the Cayman Islands. My friends were the children of bank executives, lawyers and doctors. I know many of the readers of this article can remember vacations like that. I also know that everyone here knows the value of a good teacher. Good teachers got us in school here at the university. Good teachers taught us all how to read and write. The next time you think to complain about high taxes, remember that the reason you have money to pay those taxes is partly due to the fact that you can read and write. The government has the money to make life better for teachers. The government has the money to make a life as a teacher a desirable and viable goal for a college graduate. As it stands now, I want to be a teacher. As it stands now, I will never be a teacher.



# Using the Bible to foster hatred destroys its meaning

Conservatives who use the Bible for their own purposes lack integrity.

It seems that many people took offense to the words that I used in my last column about Chris Plumblee. In particular, many had problems with the words "fascist," "swine" and "Nazi." Political debate is anything but civil, respectable or well mannered. On the contrary, it is disgusting, rowdy and

was appointed Chancellor; he threw communists, socialists and labor leaders in Dachau, a concentration camp where he ran nefarious "experiments" on the poor souls.

He also supported fellow fascist, Francisco Franco in the Spanish Civil War because the Spanish Republican government was full of real socialists - they advocated a program of redistribution of wealth that riled Adolf to no end.

Plumblee also stated that the baby killin', pig-pickin', hog look-alike Bob Barr is no longer supported by pro-life groups. That's just plain wrong, and any idiot that follows politics would know that Barr received endorsements from many pro-life groups, including the National Right to Life organization.

But there are bigger issues to deal with now, namely the trend of conservatives co-opting religion for their own deranged purposes. In his latest column, Plumblee justifies bigotry with the Bible. This is one of the most dangerous misuses that "Christians" make with the Bible.

I use quotations around that word because a good majority of people who call themselves believers in Christ, I believe, will most likely burn in the deepest trench of Hell - right next to Ronald Reagan and the infamous Mitchell Brothers.

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Orrin Hatch. We all know "Christians" like this - they may go to church every Sunday, but not before getting pissy drunk the night before at the frat party. They intently listen to half of the sermon; the other half spent snoring and drooling on the hymnal. But the defining characteristic is the self-righteousness of these people - imposing their own psychotic morality on others by browbeating them with perverted Bible verses.

While sitting in Benson, I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw the statements, "interracial relationships are forbidden to the Israelites in the Old Testament, and are argued strongly against in the writings of the Apostle Paul, the position of Bob Jones University, then, is not based on ignorance or prejudice against people, but a practice." I wondered if the *Old Gold and Black* had suddenly turned into the KKK weekly newsletter.

I would love to see Plumblee explain Acts 10:34. It's a little ditty that begins with the phrase, "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness is accepted with him." I also wonder

what would be Plumblee's response to Galatians 3:28? It's one that Christians and "Christians" all know: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond or free, there is neither male or female: for ye are all one in Christ."

Now after fully reading the Bible, how can Plumblee say that Bob Jones University's stances are "not based on ignorance or prejudice against people, but a practice?"

Christians know that racism equals hatred, and there is no room for hatred in the body of Christ. "Christians," on the other hand, somehow equate hatred with Christ. It's a deplorable stance and the people of this breed should be locked away for long periods of time surrounded by Blacks and gays as their punishment.

The last topic I will deal with is something near and dear to everybody - money. Plumblee advocates Bush's tax plan with all the starry-eyed naivete of a Midwestern girl in her first night on Sunset Strip. The fact of the matter is that Bush is revamping Reaganomics - a failed concept that many Republicans still hold dear. Rich people will not spend their money on poor people. It's a fact of life that most rich people are snobby and miserly, so they why would they go out of their way to invest in the well being of a starving child on the streets of Boston?

This miserly instinct of the rich is apparent at tax time. America really has a retrograde tax code because the rich

use tax loopholes to get out of paying their rightful share to the government. Most of burden goes on the already heavy shoulders of the middle and lower-middle class families.

The tax plan has three main points - a \$1.3 trillion tax cut over 10 years, abolishment of the estate tax, and repealing the marriage "penalty." By most figures, the \$1.3 trillion will balloon into almost three trillion after interest and other considerations are taken into account, gobbling up the surplus. Now this raises two objections: first, why should I get cheated just because Mumsy and Daddy want to buy Chip a private jet?

Second, how does Bush propose to get the funding for his education plan, the silly missile defense plan, pay raises for the military, Social Security, Medicaid and his coke habit?

He'll have the raise taxes, which would make him just like his idiot father, who gave his "word" that no new taxes would be introduced. Those shiftless Bushes love ruining economies, and I'm sorry to say that Bush Jr. is already setting this country on the fast track to poverty.

I'll end this column with a quote from senior Michael Bonfiglio. In all of his wisdom, he summed up Plumblee's view of the world in three sentences. "How can anyone think like that? Something is definitely wrong with him. Either he wasn't raised right, or he was dropped on his head as kid."

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profane. The lexicon of politics and war are one in the same, and as such, I believe my word choice was justified. This column will deal with Plumblee's disturbing mix of politics, Christianity and his warped view of the Apostle Paul, but first I must address some of the "factual errors" in my previous column. Hitler was raving fascist; he hated everything from the Left. The Nazi regime was marked by intense property rights and rabid jingoism - not redistribution of wealth, which the main tenet of socialism. If Plumblee wants further proof then he can look to Hitler's actions once he