

# Politics have no place in public education

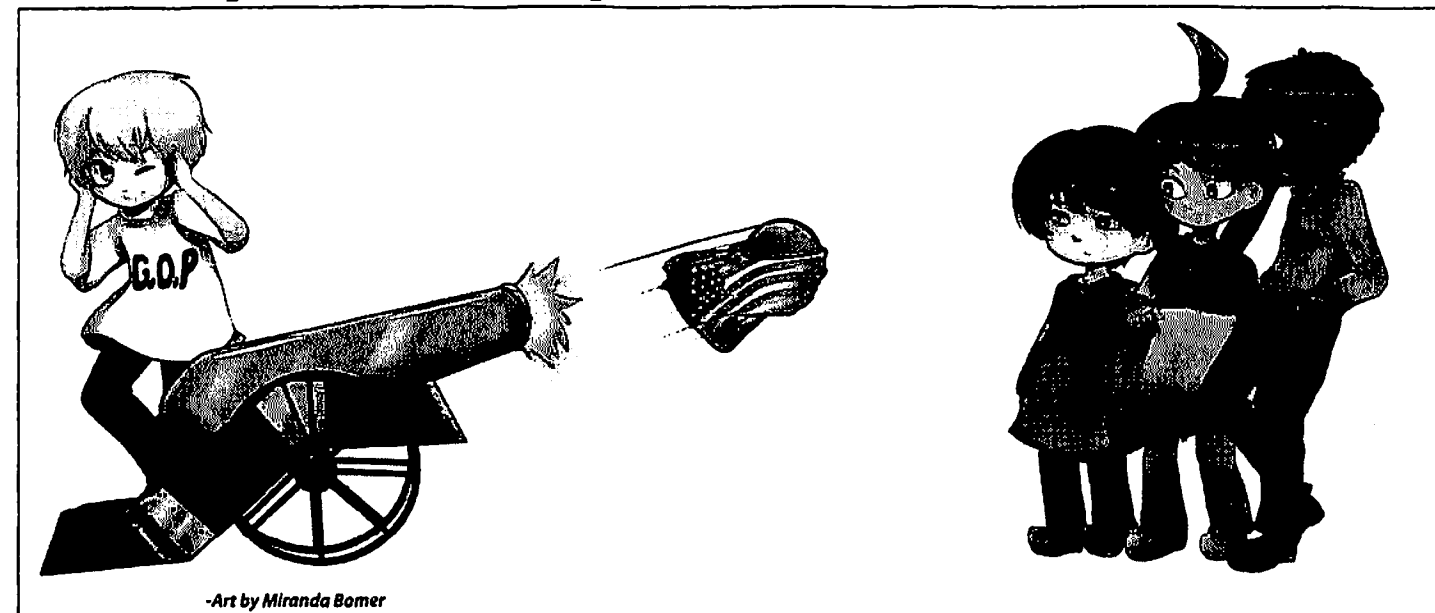
Colonizers massacred the majority of the Native Americans and forcibly assimilated the remaining population. However, if lawmakers in several conservative states have their way, students enrolled in AP U.S. History (APUSH) next year will learn mainly about how settlers improved the lives of Native Americans and advanced their societies.

The revised APUSH curriculum has come under fire in states such as Texas, Oklahoma, Georgia, Nebraska, North Carolina and Tennessee.

Much of the stir is caused by the course's increased emphasis on gender, class, race and ethnicity, along with less focus on major historical figures. Oklahoma's House of Representatives passed House Bill 1380 in February, which potentially allows the state to cut funds for APUSH and revise the course's curriculum. It is detrimental for state governments to interfere with public education, based on their own political agendas, because it reduces students' quality of education.

One of the main goals of public education is to equip students with the skills and tools necessary for civic engagement. Promoting highly subjective views to sway students discourages them from thinking independently. If students are presented with a limited or one-sided view of history, they're unable to make the most informed decisions for the betterment of society.

A common critique of the new APUSH curriculum is that it overemphasizes the negative aspects of our country's history—specifically slavery, the persecution of American Indians and the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II—while



marginalizing our nation's accomplishments. While U.S. patriotism is justified, it's unhelpful to push nationalistic ideologies when solving current issues. If the U.S. had no faults, it would not need government, nor would opposing parties exist.

The Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) currently accepts the APUSH curriculum, allowing only the College Board to revise AP curriculum. However, at a meeting last September to discuss the new APUSH curriculum, the SBOE commented that it's "critical of American exceptionalism, the free enterprise system, and emphasizes negative aspects of our nation's history while minimizing positive aspects." American ex-

ceptionalism is the political theory that the United States has unique qualities due to freedoms and opportunities. The SBOE is incorrect in thinking that critiquing "exceptional" qualities about the United States undermines American freedoms. The success of a democratic state is the informed citizen.

The new curriculum's objectives focus on developing students' argumentation abilities. In fact, critiquing the government is fully rooted in patriotism. It's a direct exercise of the first amendment's freedom of speech and petition clause—a freedom unique to the United States. One way that the governments of Japan and China shape and maintain the image of their countries is through

the censorship of history textbooks. In addition, allowing students to view the full spectrum of American history encourages them to make more thoughtful political decisions about their country because the basis of democracy—another unique quality of the U.S.—depends on the informed citizen.

Political influence shouldn't have a place in education. State legislators should have defined legal boundaries that distinguish informing and influencing.

**STAFFSTANCE**

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