

Confederacy of dunces

It shouldn't take a mass killing to reject the rebel flag and the racism it represents

MEENA ANDERSON
staff reporter

My mom is a 5-foot-2 130-pound, white woman, and my dad is a 6-foot, 225-pound black man. That leaves my brother, sister and I in difficult situations at times. We've been to restaurants as a family, and we've had people look at us strangely when my parents pay for something together. People have asked me on some occasions if I'm my sister's mother even though our actual mom is with us. When I go out somewhere with just my mother, a lot of people think we're not related. We've had people ask my parents if they were together, even though it's clear that my siblings and I are related to both of them. Ever since moving to Austin a year ago from London, many Americans label me as black, just because my skin isn't "all the way" white. Since coming to America a year ago, I've been struggling with issues involving racism. Why do people think it's OK to discriminate against others because of the color of their skin? People have yelled things at me on the street about how I'm an idiot because I'm black.

I feel fear when I see certain police officers in public, and sadness and anger when people yell ignorant comments about the color of my skin. I feel silenced when there's a lack of representation for part of my heritage in the media and in the cinematic world; these feelings are a weight on my shoulders, and that weight is put there by the remnants of systematic racism in America.

One manifestation of that racism is the persistence of Confederate symbols in American culture. I've seen people on the freeway with Confederate flag bumper stickers. I've seen people flying flags with the "heritage, not hate" slogan and a picture of the Confederate flag. The argument that these symbols have to do with heritage and

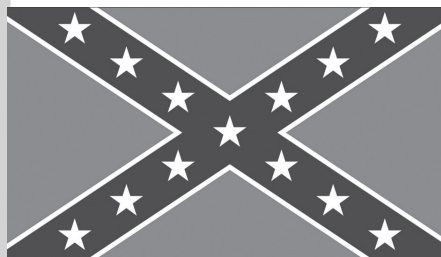
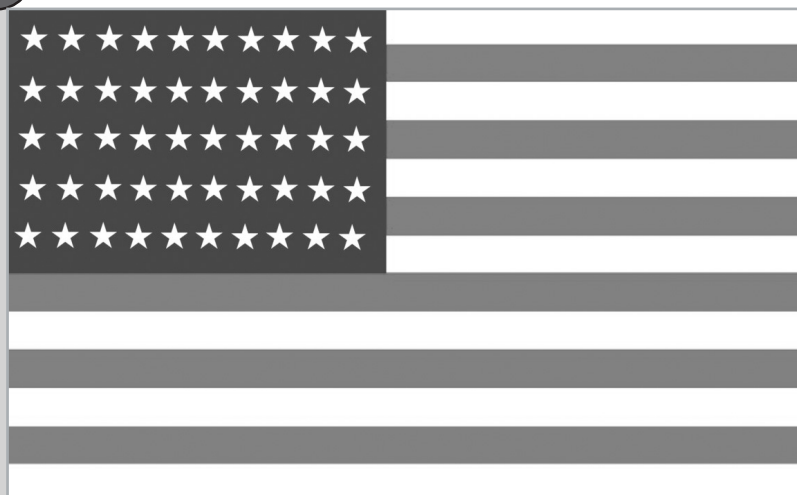
not hatred rang hollow last June when a white man murdered nine black people during their prayer meeting at a historic black church in Charleston, S.C. The killer had a website where he posted pictures of himself burning the American flag and of the Confederate battle flag, along with a manifesto declaring that he wanted the killings to ignite a racial civil war in America. In the wake of this tragedy, many public officials have taken down or are considering removing Confederate symbols or memorials.

The tragedy may have caused politicians and school officials to take action, but these symbols don't just suddenly appear when a racist event happens. The symbols have been a problem from the beginning. Slavery was abolished in the U.S. on Dec. 6, 1865, only after a prolonged civil war, which was fought between North and South precisely over the question of whether or not slavery should be abolished.

The Confederate battle flag is direct representation the South during the Civil War, a white South that opted to secede from the country in order to "protect" their right to own slaves.

Let's stop right there; the Confederate states did not want to be a part of America. They left the United States so they could still have slavery. This is the first reason the "heritage not hate" argument is invalid. I've heard multiple people drone on about how proud they are to be American, celebrating their American history and heritage by flying the Confederate flag. If the Confederate states didn't want to be American, then that heritage isn't even American: it's Confederate, and by definition anti-American. And, guess what? The Confederate states were racist. They were pro-slavery. Slavery was a racist thing that happened. Glad we cleared that up.

Another reason the "heritage, not hate" argument is invalid is because that heritage was hateful. The Confederate states wanted



to continue the dehumanization of black people. Beating, overworking and commodifying people because of the color of their skin is racist. Racism is a form of hate. This means the Confederate heritage that people are defending is rooted in hostility. It's a hateful heritage. Maybe that's why Confederate symbols always resurface when racism does. Many state flags incorporated Confederate symbols into their design in the 1950s as a symbolic opposition to school integration. Some of the states removed the Confederate symbol from their flags, and others have kept it. Voters in Mississippi voted on Tuesday to keep the Confederate flag in the upper left-hand corner of the state flag.

Another argument I've heard is that people are trying to "erase history" by taking down Confederate memorials, like the statue of Jefferson Davis in the South UT Mall and or by renaming schools that honor Confederates like AISD's own Robert E. Lee Elementary

School. I don't think we should have things dedicated to honoring people who were pro-slavery. I don't think we should consider Confederates to be heroes. I don't think we should have good things named after people with bad intentions, who had no motivation to change those intentions. Taking down monuments dedicated to people who were racist is not "erasing history."

What I would define as erasing Confederate history would be not teaching people about it in school, just pretending like the Civil War never happened. Everyone should know about what the South stood for in the Civil War, and how that's affected racism in our society today. I want people to learn about why, even though the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964, we still have news of unarmed people of color being brutally killed by white police officers, why minorities only have slightly less than 25 percent of representation in Hollywood movies, even though only around 15 percent of the world population is white. A lot of the problems in society stem from ignorance, and if people could be educated, by school, by their parents, by the environment they're in, then I really think that we could help put an end to the killing of innocent people, to the lack of representation, to the fear in the face of oppression. But it will take time, it will take patience, and it will take education. But first, everyone needs to be willing to make changes that are way past overdue.

May contain traces of



A recent study lists meat as a carcinogen, but what is to blame: bad meat, or bad math?

CHARLIE HOLDEN
staff reporter

Paul Pew has been teaching math for the past 21 years, and over that time has had many “math moments” as he likes to call them.

“Math moments are something I that I do on Facebook,” Pew said. “I never offer opinions on politics or anything else because I just don’t think Facebook posts change anyone’s minds about politics, it just gets people mad. But when I see math being abused to further someone’s argument, I will point out where their math is complete bogus”

When a report was released by the International Agency for Research on Cancer, Pew couldn’t pass up the opportunity for one of his moments. In late October, Pew updated his status with a rant on the find-

ings, which drew in 62 likes and 6 shares as of Nov. 12.

“A new, much publicized study is showing that eating red meat increases your chance of colorectal cancer by 18 percent,” Pew wrote. “Here’s what that means: Your chance of getting colorectal cancer is about 4.8 percent if you’re a guy, slightly less for women. An 18 percent increase does not make that 22 percent. It’s 18 percent of the 4.8 percent, which is 0.864 percent. So if the study is perfectly true then eating a hotdog every day of your life will increase your chance of disease by almost, not quite, one percent.”

Although the chances that you’ll develop cancer over a bacon burger are slim, according to nutrition and wellness teacher Grace Odu, meat is still something to be eaten in moderation, especially when it comes to extremely processed products like

bacon or hotdogs.

“Anything that’s fatty you’re supposed to eat in small amounts,” Odu said. “It wouldn’t be good on a regular basis. The Food and Drug Administration suggests that we eat no more than three ounces of meat with our meals. I try not to eat meat real frequently, especially the bacon and the hotdogs and the sausage. I think everybody should eat that in moderation.”

While moderation works for some, others opt for no meat at all.

“I’ve been a vegetarian my whole life,” sophomore Nickie Cohen said. “I love animals a lot, and that’s how it started. All the health benefits have made it really easy for me to keep going.”

The *Vegetarian Times* published a study finding that 3.2 percent of adult Americans are vegetarians, and 53 percent of them are vegetarians because they want to improve

their overall health.

“I don’t eat meat and I’m super healthy,” Cohen said. “If you’re going to eat meat I don’t think the benefits outweigh the bad things.”

The bad things Cohen refers to aren’t just limited to potential cancer risks or even the intake of too many fat calories, but something much more recent to hit the meat industry.

“Some meat, the animals are fed antibiotics and stuff, which who knows what that does?” Pew said. “I don’t think we’ve been doing it long enough to know yet. Little risky. But life is a risk. Coming to school is a risk, and yet I keep doing it.

“Of course I have many friends who don’t eat bacon or don’t eat meat at all for their own reasons, and that’s great. I want everyone to do what they do, I just don’t want people basing their decisions about what to eat or not to eat on bad math.”

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the U.S.

Source: Center for Disease Control

The average American consumes **71.2** pounds of red meat annually (which is about how much the average American fifth-grader weighs).

Source: United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Center

Red meat is any meat that is red when it is raw. Beef, veal and pork are examples of red meat.

Source: Merriam-Webster Dictionary

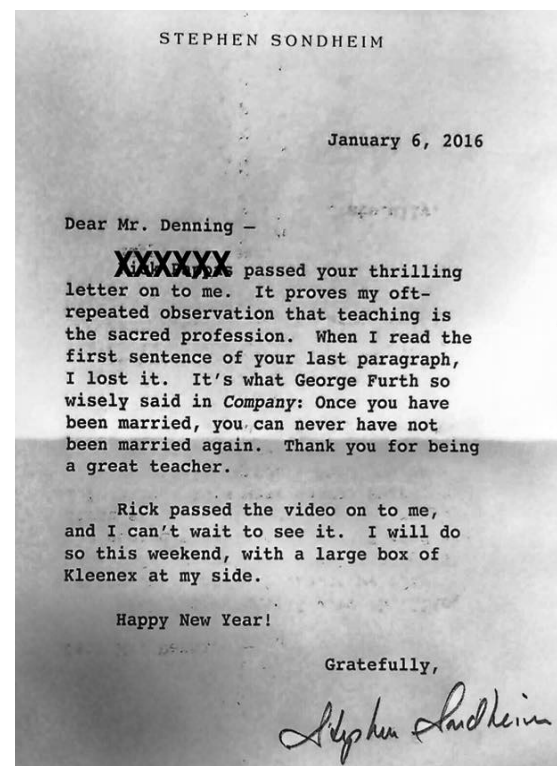
In 2012...

134,784 people were diagnosed with colorectal cancer. 51,516 of those people died.

Source: Center for Disease Control



Seniors Ezra Hankin (left) and Kendrick Knight (center), and junior Riley Simpson (right) perform in the theatre department's production of Sondheim on Sondheim. Photo by Zoe Hocker.



Sondheim's letter to Mr. Joshua Denning. Photo provided by Denning.

Sondheim on Sondheim on Sondheim

After being impressed with show, lawyer connects MacTheatre with famous producer

MEENA ANDERSON, JOSEPHINE CLARKE
staff reporters

After the successful run of MacTheatre's *Sondheim on Sondheim*, theatre teacher and director Joshua Denning was ready for strike. While approaching the stage, however, he was stopped by a man who told him, 'I represent God.'

"I thought he was a religious activist, or from a church or something, and I didn't quite understand," Denning said. "So I was like, 'Oh...?' There was a song in the musical called 'God' about Stephen Sondheim, and I was clearly confused. Then he said 'I'm Stephen Sondheim's lawyer.'"

The lawyer proceeded to ask for a DVD copy of the show, promising that the theatre department wasn't in trouble for violating copyright law. On the contrary, he loved the show, and wished to send it to Musical Theatre International, a very big musical publisher, and Stephen Sondheim.

"He said, 'It's been [MTI's] goal for high schools to do their productions and a lot of high schools are scared to do them because the music is so hard,'" Denning said, quoting Sondheim's lawyer. "I want them to see that this is possible

and that it can be done really, really well."

Sondheim's lawyer asked Denning to write a letter addressed to him, to Sondheim, to the head of MTI and to Broadway director James Lapine, explaining the process of directing and rehearsing the show. Sondheim recently got back to him.

"[Sondheim's letter] was dated Jan. 6, and he said he was going to watch it the next weekend, so I'm assuming he's seen it already," Denning said. "I hope he just loves it. I hope he sees and feels the purity of having his work interpreted by young artists doing something that adult professionals could do."

When rehearsing *Sondheim on Sondheim*, Denning made sure all of the actors in the production put their best efforts into it. When he found out that Sondheim was seeing the play, Denning felt blessed.

"I feel really honored," Denning said, "I don't know what else I could do in this life that would actually be a higher honor than that. He is, in terms of musical theatre, the most brilliant artist that we have in the world. I mean, there isn't really anyone who has a reputation for being any more innovative, or brilliant, or accomplished, or heartfelt, or amazing

than Stephen Sondheim."

While this is an amazing accomplishment for the theatre community at McCallum, Denning said it shines a bright light upon the school as a whole.

"McCallum, every year, seems to get stronger across the board, the whole school seems to get better and better, and I love how the reputation for the school is growing and becoming more positive," Denning said. "That's just a huge feather in the cap of all the teachers and students at McCallum. That's something for the yearbooks and the history books for sure."

Bragging rights excluded, Denning believes students gain so much from the opportunity to go to a school like McCallum.

"I think, once you feel like you're important, you have something to offer," Denning said. "The Grammy makes us feel like we're important artists, like we're important teachers, and this makes us feel important. I don't mean important like we're better than other people or arrogant, but I mean important like what we do matters. What we do is worthwhile, there's value in what we do in terms of education, in terms of building a community in Austin, in terms of making the world a better place, one artist at a time."

the shield

Skip class, no pass

New attendance policy
requires students
to attend 90 percent
of class time in order
to receive credit



Under the new attendance policy, students must fill out tutoring logs in order to make up the hours they miss in class. Photo by Haley Hegefelfd.

MADDIE DORAN staff reporter

AISD's new attendance policy is hitting many students and parents hard. Just ask sophomore Bethany Raup. McCallum administrators communicated AISD's new policy over winter break to parents through a letter.

Raup missed five A-Day class periods and all of her A-day class credits were revoked during the fall semester and her GPA dropped by 0.5.

"Last semester I was in check with the previous amount of days missed," Raup said.

Based off of the old policy, Raup was within the credit range, having missed fewer than six classes.

"The amount of hours I should have to make up should only be four," Raup said. "I have to make up 16 hours to receive credits for these classes."

Like Raup, McCallum parent Annisa Ryland also learned of the new policy through principal Mike Garrison's Dec. 16 letter.

Ryland was pretty upset about the new

policy and wondered how it would affect students.

"Changing documented illness to an unexcused absence seems to fly in the face of standard public health practices, as well as common sense," Ryland said. "Penalizing a student for staying home when they are ill will encourage them to come to school when they are possibly contagious, exposing other students and teachers. This change seems to not only put students and faculty at increased risk, but has the very real potential to have a negative financial impact as well."

Ryland went to district authorities to voice her opinion.

"I contacted vice principal Featherstone, and he let me know that this was a district-wide policy, so on Jan. 7, I sent an email to Superintendent Cruz," Ryland said.

Ryland has tried to tweet Dr. Cruz on Twitter, and she posted on Facebook, asking other parents opinions about the policy.

"His assistant told me that she would get the letter to him, but I have not heard from

"Whether it is their extracurricular commitments, a job, or transportation issues to Saturday school, I worry about the negative impact this may have on keeping children engaged and on track when they have been absent due to illness."

-parent Annisa Ryland "

anyone from the district."

"I looked up policies at other Texas districts and from the information provided on their websites and social media pages, it appears that other districts have interpreted the state policies with public health concerns in mind. Most of those I looked up still allowed for a reasonable number of parent-authorized, excused absences due to illness," Ryland said. "I am simply

looking for an answer on why we can't do the same."

Ryland is worried about how students will make up the days they missed.

"Whether it is their extracurricular commitments, a job, or transportation issues to Saturday school, I worry about the negative impact this may have on keeping children engaged and on track when they have been absent due to an illness," Ryland said.

The school district requires that the hours you missed of school be made up through tutoring hours and make-up work.

Raup missed school since she was sick or had a family emergency. She wishes to communicate to AISD that missing school isn't always something a student can control.

"Being sick should be an excused even without a doctor's note," Raup said. "Many forms of sickness don't necessarily call for a doctor."

Excused absences, however, do not count against truancy. If a student misses school for the given amount of days for the semester, they will still have to do the make up hours.

How to get away with mistrial

The real problem with Netflix's Making a Murderer

NATALIE MURPHY

Co-editor-in-chief

"Poor people lose all the time."

Steven Avery sat in his jail cell in Manitowoc County, Wisconsin, dressed in Mr. Monopoly's cartoon jumpsuit, on the phone with the only people who believed his story: his parents. A jury of his peers was being assembled to decide whether he should go back to the same prison to which he was wrongfully sentenced 20 years earlier, after being framed for the rape of a local woman.

"They got to my head."

Brendan Dassey, Avery's nephew, sat in an interrogation room with his mother, the only person who was still on his side after he gave testimony confessing that he was involved in the mutilation and murder of Teresa Halbach. Dassey, who was 16 at the time, was more concerned with getting back to school to finish his science project than the pending murder investigation. A cold blooded killer, clearly.

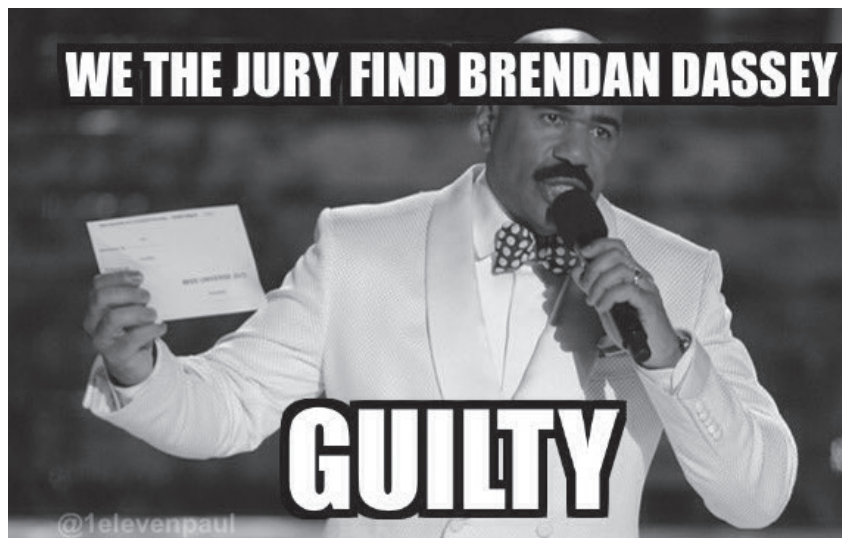
"This can't be happening."

I sat on my couch, yelling at a 2006 courtroom filled with people who can't hear me.

Making a Murderer, the Netflix original documentary about the Avery and Dassey trials, both of which took place in rural Wisconsin in 2007, has flooded news feeds and online forums since the documentary's release on Dec. 18. Among those angry Internet commentators is me. I stayed up until three in the morning for a solid week, both intrigued and disgusted by the controversial details that made up the famous case.

Though there have been hundreds of reviews, theories and protests to prove Avery innocent of the 2005 murder, my own psyche can't get past the hot mess that was the Dassey trial.

The documentary shows Dassey's confession, clearly exposing the corrupt manipulation used by his interrogators. It was in the best interest of the Manitowoc County Police Department to put Avery behind bars due to his recent lawsuit against them after his exoneration from a 1985 conviction after new evidence suggested that Avery had been framed. Dassey's confession was the strongest evidence the



Brendan Dassey (right) cries to his mother Barb Tadych (left) after police interrogation. Image courtesy of Netflix.

state had to this point. It put Teresa Halbach in Avery's garage at the time of her murder, and a 16-year-old with learning disabilities behind bars for life.

The coerced confession was not the only travesty committed by the state in Dassey's trial. The original attorney assigned to Dassey by the state, Len Kachinsky, expressly told Dassey he believed he was guilty and kept Dassey's legal guardian from crucial information and communication during the trial. When Dassey requested a new lawyer, he was originally denied one. It wasn't until Avery's attorney, Dean Strang, stepped in to provide crucial evidence against Kachinsky that the court finally granted Dassey an unbiased lawyer. Still the damage done by



Kachinsky's investigator who coerced Dassey into further false testimony was not sticken from the prosecution case against him.

Another legal blunder was that no one ever explained why Dassey's mother, his legal guardian, wasn't present for his interrogation. Even worse, they never asked for her consent to interrogate him and then told Dassey that she had granted her consent. All of these acts are criminal offenses since Dassey was a minor at the time.

The prosecution also never shared the gaping holes in Dassey's own testimony. On the stand, Dassey finally spoke up for himself, and explained in a bombshell statement that he read his "testimony" directly from the plot of a novel he had read in school. Dassey's testimony

depicting Avery's alleged act of murder mirrors the violence found in James Patterson's *Kiss the Girls* and is every bit as fictional.

And then the final straw: the confession video. The interrogators desperately wanted Dassey to confess that he shot Halbach in the head, so they set him up with the prompt, "What happened to her head, Brendan?"

"We cut her hair?" He wants so badly to get the story right; you can hear it in his voice.

Dassey goes on to confess to a series of violent events he hopes could possibly be the end to his prosecutors' blatant manipulation. Finally, the detective gives up: "Who shot her, Brendan?"

I rose from my seat in shock. "You can't do that!" Surely this was the end. This was the episode where the Manitowoc Sheriff's Department gets shut down, Avery and Dassey go home and their family finally gets some justice. But no, Dassey is found guilty of all counts against him and sentenced to life in prison.

Other than these plot points, the documentary focuses primarily on Avery's trial, and rightful so. The prosecution is riddled with reasonable doubt and unanswered questions. But for me the biggest miscarriage of justice carried by the state of Wisconsin is Dassey's conviction.

Honestly, I don't know if Steven Avery is guilty or not. But when a 16-year-old kid who was coerced by detectives, bullied by his biased lawyer and used as the prime evidence against his own uncle admits under oath that he took his confession directly from the plot of a novel he read in school is sent to prison for life, I can't sit by and watch anymore without calling for real change.

We shouldn't walk away from our binge watching of this show, forgetting its plot as soon as we're hooked on the next sitcom Netflix "recommends for you." Regardless of opinions about Avery's role in this murder, the truth we should be taking from the show is that when the system is threatened, we are all suspects in this case. If investigators can get away with feeding classified information to 16-year-old and call it a confession, what is keeping any of us from being framed? If our justice system fails even one person, it has failed us all.