

WESTWORLD



Illegal actions require punishment

w. Suhail Ansari
World Editor

The status of the United States' moral authority has almost irrevocably diminished over the past six years in the international community due to its illegal actions abroad. Not only have actions such as torture served injustice to many, they have also bred more terrorists than they have captured and detained.

"[Waterboarding techniques] alienate us in the world. They serve as a recruitment tool for terrorists and increase the will of our enemies to fight us, while decreasing the will of others to work with America," President Barack Obama said on www.whitehouse.gov.

Waterboarding is an issue that recently has been put in the spotlight after Obama imposed an executive order stopping the practice. The torture technique was selected by the federal government and rubber-stamped by the previous presidential administration because it left no visible signs of damage. However, the move has been criticized because it has been used on detainees whose right of *habeas corpus* has been suspended. That is, a detainee who has not even been brought before a judge or told of the charges against him has been tortured for possible information that he has.

Due to torture techniques approved earlier, it is easier to label the U.S. as a terror-causing body and therefore make it a target of oppressed individuals

This was all done frighteningly quickly by the previous administration, supposedly to help the U.S. secure its borders. However, the measure has had detrimental consequences. The U.S. is now accused of using the same types of methods terror groups would use to extract information. The lack of rights given to the detainees represents a paramount step backwards in America's moral standing. To know that our elected officials swept the morals and values America was built upon under the rug shows the regression of our nation.

As our new President has said, the move created more resentment toward the U.S. across the world. Due to torture techniques approved earlier, it is easier to label the U.S. as a terror-causing body and therefore make it a target of oppressed individuals.

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This controversy has generated passionate debate on both sides of the aisle, with criticism especially directed at Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA). The Speaker supposedly was aware of the torture as she attended a few top secret meetings which included talk of torture techniques and did not raise the alarm; she says Central Intelligence Agency officials misled her during the meeting, a charge that has brought a firestorm of criticism upon her from the Right.

Federal regulations certainly do exist which protect the basic human rights of any prisoner, convicted or not. The Constitution includes key civil provisions for all individuals. It was drafted during turbulent times to make sure that the new democracy would not go down the slippery slope of imperialistic values.

The recent torture practices violate the ideals of any just democracy. As such, it is the job of the Department of Justice to oversee the legal definitions the intelligence agencies use. However, when the Department of Justice knowingly made the illegal decision to okay the torture technique, a crime was committed and proper legal action should be taken.

Government-sanctioned torture has proven detrimental to American security and to the status of the U.S. in the eyes of the world. Furthermore, it is in direct violation of the Geneva Conventions. All involved—including the previous President and Vice President of the United States—should be duly punished for their actions.

Maine legalizes same-sex marriage amid criticism

w. Nikki George
Staff Writer

"Maine is a progressive state in a number of ways, an independent state," English teacher Dana DesJardins said of the recent passage of a bill that sanctions gay marriage in Maine.

Junior Kristin Koder agrees that approving gay marriage in Maine was the right move.

"I think that approving gay marriage is a good thing and that people should be able to express the way that they feel and either way [if they approved gay marriage or not] it would not change the way people feel about each other," Koder said.

Fox News reported that on May 6, 2009, Maine's governor John Baldacci signed the bill to allow gay marriage in Maine; the Maine Senate voted 21-13 for the bill that "authorizes marriage between any two people rather than between one man and one woman."

"I believe that [allowing gay marriage] is long overdue," DesJardins added.

Senior Jason Suran agrees.

"I think it is great it is part of a growing trend. I do not think there is a real rational argument to why homosexuals should not be allowed [to marry] like the rest of us," Suran said.

Not all students agree with Suran's assessment, among them junior Dunya Youkhana.

"I think that gay marriage is wrong. Gay marriage shouldn't be allowed; marriage is between a man and a woman that love each other. I feel that a relationship [between two people of the same gender] is fine, but it should not be taken it to the next level because according to the *Bible* it is not right," Youkhana said.

Freshman Shajiah Amin concurs.

"In my religion, we are not allowed to have sexual relations with the same gender, so I think having gay marriage is going too far," Amin said.

Hampden (ME) state senator Debra Plowman holds same view as Amin when it comes to people's religious beliefs. Ac-

ording to Fox News, Plowman argued that the bill was passed "at the expense of people of faith."

Sophomore Sana Khan disagrees.

"I think gay marriage should be allowed because no matter what, if you are allowed to marry [a person] or not, you still love [him/her]," Khan said.

The notion of love conquering all resonated with other students as well.



Despite the step forward in same-sex marriage by Maine, the gay rights movement recently suffered a large setback in California as legislation legalizing same-sex marriage was repealed, a move protested above. Photo courtesy MCT Campus

"I think that gay marriages should be allowed because since [if two people] love each other, it should not matter what gender they are," freshman Gladys Jimenez said.

Senior Harris Sheikh sides with Jimenez.

"I think gay marriage should be allowed because it is not right for other people to choose if [two people] should be able to marry or not; if they love each other, then it is no one else's business," Sheikh said.

Texting while driving has proven itself dangerous

w. Helen Salamanca
Staff Writer

"As a driver, I have seen many adults text while driving. This causes them to lose their focus and can put them in dangerous situations," sophomore Jacquelyn Wodi said.

Sophomore David Skuza agrees.

"Texting while driving should be prohibited because it distracts people from driving. It will also cause a lot of accidents

that text messaging has now been considered a "growing danger" because of the high accident rate resulting from the practice.

West students cite boredom as a factor in why teens engage in texting while at the wheel of a moving vehicle.

"Teens text while they drive because they get bored [or] think that it is important to text someone right away, when in reality, it isn't," junior Courtney Deal-Banks said. "Instead of responding to a text message while driving, someone in the passenger's seat should read and answer the text [for the driver]."

According to www.aol.com, a study was done by Nationwide Insurance which "suggests that driving while texting [DWT] is generational, with 37 percent of people age 18-27 saying they text message while driving; while 14 percent of those ages 28-44 and two percent of drivers ages 45-60 admitted to it."

Wodi offers another assessment, suggesting that teens are drawing too much of the blame.

"Teens are not the only ones prone to texting while driving because adults are, too," Wodi said.

Researchers at www.livescience.com report that a study was done of 21 teens in a driving simulator. They found that "while texting or searching their MP3 players, they changed speed dramatically, wove in and out of their lanes and, in some cases, ran over virtual pedestrians."

According to the Nationwide Insurance study, around "20 percent of drivers are sending or receiving text messages while behind the wheel."

New Jersey and Washington are the only two states that currently prohibit text messaging while driving. Many states are now using Washington and New Jersey as role models as they attempt to do the same for their states. The following states that are working on similar laws: Florida, Hawaii, Iowa, Delaware, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Kansas, Kentucky, New York, Ohio and Rhode Island, according to *U.S. News and World Report*.

So, why do drivers engage in what studies and anecdotal evidence suggest is a dangerous practice? Wodi offered this suggestion: "I believe that [people] text while driving because the law made it illegal for people to talk on their cell phones."



Texting while driving has proven to be dangerous to public safety. Photo courtesy www.wikipedia.org

that may include deaths," Skuza said. "Instead of putting yourself and others at [risk], people should stop their bad habit of texting while driving."

According to a recent article on www.cnn.com, 17 states are currently banning "young" and "inexperienced" drivers from using cell phones to place calls or text message. The article notes

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West would benefit from proposed change to NCLB

w Morgan Quilici
Staff Writer

“It is like having a fourth grader who plays basketball and expecting [him/her] to play with the same rules and standards as professional ball players. They cannot do it. They will be able to do it at some point, but they cannot now.”



Secretary of Education Arnie Duncan has promised to help fix the No Child Left Behind legislation. Photo courtesy www.wikipedia.org

With those words, English language learners (ELL) teacher Leslie Natzke summed up the frustrations of many regarding the fact that ELL students and those with disabilities are expected to meet Adequate Year Progress (AYP) under the federal mandates of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.

“To me, what the system now is saying is that you are a failure. They are saying it to [the school] and they are saying it to the kids,” Natzke added.

Help may be on the way.

On May 4, Congressman John Boozman (R-AR) introduced a bill that changes elements of NCLB’s requirements. According to www.arkansasmatters.com, the bill focuses on changes to the NCLB assessment programs regarding students covered by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and students referred to as ELL. This new piece of legislation would provide states and educators the opportunity to craft certain accommodations on tests such as the ACT and Prairie State Examination (PSAE), to better suit the needs of students with disabilities and students who are just learning English.

“It would be a much fairer system for those students who are new to the country. For a student that comes here knowing no English as a freshman and has to take the ACT as a junior, I don’t think anyone would describe that as a fair system,” ELL teacher Brad Wilson said.

Mahtab Hejazi, a sophomore ELL student who has been speaking English for three years, and Eric Kim a sophomore ELL student who has been speaking English for two years, both agreed that they want more time to become fluent in English before taking tests such as the ACT.

“It is kind of unfair because how are students who just came here supposed to know the same things as students who are from here?” Kim said.

While stressing that schools and their students should be accountable, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Anne Roloff said, “There is no perfect way to test kids, but I think we should be held responsible and accountable for student improvement. From the minute they walk into our doors, to the time they leave, how are they improving? We need to be held accountable for how our students perform and how they grow, and [these tests] are not showing that,” Roloff said.

Roloff added that if the new law were to be put into effect, it would help students with learning disabilities show their full potential.

“Students who have a disability aren’t necessarily going to meet standards in a particular area because of the disability,” Roloff said.

She also expressed the need for testing laws in Illinois to focus on all students as individuals.

Although both Niles West and Niles North have met AYP as entire schools since the NCLB Act began in 2002, the failure of certain subgroups, most notably ELL and special education, to

meet AYP has resulted in the repeated questions of fairness to the students and also to the schools.

Wilson expressed concern for the ELL students’ feelings after taking a test for which they are not ready.

“Through no fault of their own, they are probably going to feel pretty poor about [taking the test],” Wilson said.

Natzke echoed Wilson’s concerns.

“It is pretty detrimental to the students because they are being forced to take a test that is so above their heads. It is like studying Spanish for three years and then having to take a college placement exam in Spanish,” Natzke said.

Natzke and Wilson both stressed that secondary education, fairness to students and image of the schools are concerns.

“The fairness comes in when you are looking at the school because the test is really judging the school,” Natzke said. “To me, it is not fair because as a school that serves an increasing number of ELL students, expecting them—after they have only been learning English for three years—to take The ACT is ridiculous,” she said.

Wilson concurs.

“The schools are being judged on their scores in Illinois, and it is not really fair to the schools to look at each class as a single point in time. To just take a snapshot of your junior year and to say that all the juniors at the school as a whole are failing or passing based on the performance of one group of students is not really fair,” Wilson said.

The common consensus among students and staff surveyed was that changes must be made to the testing laws in Illinois to accommodate students better and to improve the overall image of schools such as North and West.

Boozman’s proposal seeks to improve the legislation.

“State and local educators should have the authority to craft alternatives which provide students with the opportunity to succeed on the tests required by this legislation,” Boozman said.

Roloff applauds the proposed legislation.

“We throw a test at [ELL students and students with disabilities] and we expect them to meet standards, and if they don’t we are labeled as a failing school. It is so unfair. It is unfair to the child; it is unfair to the school; and it is a real problem,” Roloff said.

In a recent article in *U.S. News and World Report*, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan vowed to fix the problems with NCLB that Roloff outlines.

“I know there are schools that are beating the odds where students are getting better every year, and they are labeled failures; that can be discouraging and demoralizing,” Duncan said.

School to add cameras in classrooms to maintain student safety

w Nikki George
Staff Writer

“I don’t think [cameras] are needed [in classrooms] because you have a direct supervisor in those areas, and we trust our supervisors and staff members. I have the full and utmost confidence that while in class, a staff member can deal with any situation that might come up,” Assistant Principal of Operations Ryan McTague said in response to published reports that a British school will install surveillance cameras in classrooms.

“It is an invasion of privacy between the student and teacher, because everything that goes on in the classroom is recorded and being watched,” senior Diana Krpan added.

The report, featured in an article on www.telograph.co.uk, said that “King’s Academy in Middlesbrough will operate [cameras] throughout the new school, to watch over expensive computer equipment and will assist staff by providing evidence to clear teachers if they are falsely accused of abuse of assault.”

McTague expressed the belief that, at West, cameras are already in place in the areas in which they are needed.

“Where we have cameras are areas that are not directly supervised, so I think it is important that we have cameras in those areas because there are situations that arise where there is not a direct supervision like in a classroom,” McTague said.

Sophomore Patrick O’Connor agrees with McTague, and said that “we do not have many behavioral problems.”

“We already have cameras in the hallway, so [therefore], it would be overkill,” O’Connor added.

Junior Avi Schneider disagrees with O’Connor.

“If the administration puts cameras into classrooms it will make the school safer and keep violence to the minimum,” Schneider said.

Many believe that in-class cameras are unnecessary.

“While students are talking to each other in class, they may not

feel comfortable because they know there are cameras watching and listening to them,” freshman Hirangi Patel said.

Not only do students feel cameras are an invasion of privacy, but also can be a distraction in the classroom.

“I do not think there should be cameras because they take away from the personal level that the students and the teacher have with each other, and that can affect learning in a negative way,” senior Nimra Elahi said.

Junior Jazmine Herrera agrees.

“We shouldn’t have cameras in the classroom because they could be a distraction in the classroom; students may pay more attention to the cameras than actually learning,” Herrera said.

Cost is another consideration.

“It seems like a really expensive investment in a problem that would seem to be resolvable without cameras,” mathematics teacher Robert Nortillo said.

In fact, notes the *Telegraph*, a network of 40 to 50 cameras, which would cover the average school, would cost about £16,000 [about \$22,293].

Junior Angeli Ledesma doesn’t have a problem with inserting cameras into classrooms, however, feels as if the administration “does not trust us enough.” She thinks by monitoring classroom activity, it is “going a little too far.”

Students surveyed feel that teachers already have control in their classrooms.



“I don’t think there should be cameras in the classroom because we have a teacher, and the fact that we also have security guards on every level is enough to maintain control in a classroom,” sophomore

Shayma Haji said.

As for junior George Davros, cameras in classrooms are just like “big brother.”

“Why not just have [security] give us a personal shadow to follow us around all day,” Davros said. “I do not need that.”

Freshman Jasmin Nieves summed up the feelings of many.

“I don’t think there should be cameras because there are enough cameras in the school, and if there are cameras in the classroom, what is the point of having security guards?” Nieves said.