

Thou shalt not intermingle church and state

New law violates Constitution by allowing classrooms to display the Ten Commandments

By Regina Sechter and Efua Obeng
Staff Writer and Reporter

Imagine walking into your first period class on August 21st and the first thing that catches your eye is a large display of the Ten Commandments.

On July 26, 2001 the North Carolina Senate passed a law allowing the Ten Commandments to be posted in public schools. This law is a direct violation of our first amendment rights regarding freedom of religion and separation of church and state.

Consider Grimsley- a diverse campus and a melting pot for multiple cultures and religions. Our campus embodies Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Atheists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and others. Some believe in monotheism and others worship multiple gods. It is unfair for our government to place one ideology over another. By passing this law, our government places Christianity and Judaism above other religions and belittles other faiths.

Our government recognizes the fact that posting this religious document would cause discomfort, controversy, and could also be considered disre-

spectful. Because of this conflict the government is allowing the posting of the Ten Commandments only along with other specified historical documents, thus making each document part of a larger exhibition in every classroom.

The government's sole purpose for incorporating these other documents is strictly to make this a politically correct display. This tactic is only a loophole designed to avoid the matter of

separation of church and state. The only reason the government is doing this is to get around the logistics of the matter and to hopefully appease those who find the Judeo-Christian doctrine offensive.

These other historical documents to be displayed along side the commandments include the Justinian Codes, the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, and the Magna Carta, all of which have no religious

orientation. As a matter of fact, the Mecklenburg Declaration may be a hoax. The original copy of this document has yet to be discovered.

However, having such a display is totally optional and is being left up to the schools' administrators. Mrs. Teague has decided to leave the decision up to Grimsley's leadership team, although the majority of people affected by such a display are students. They have no voice in such a crucial

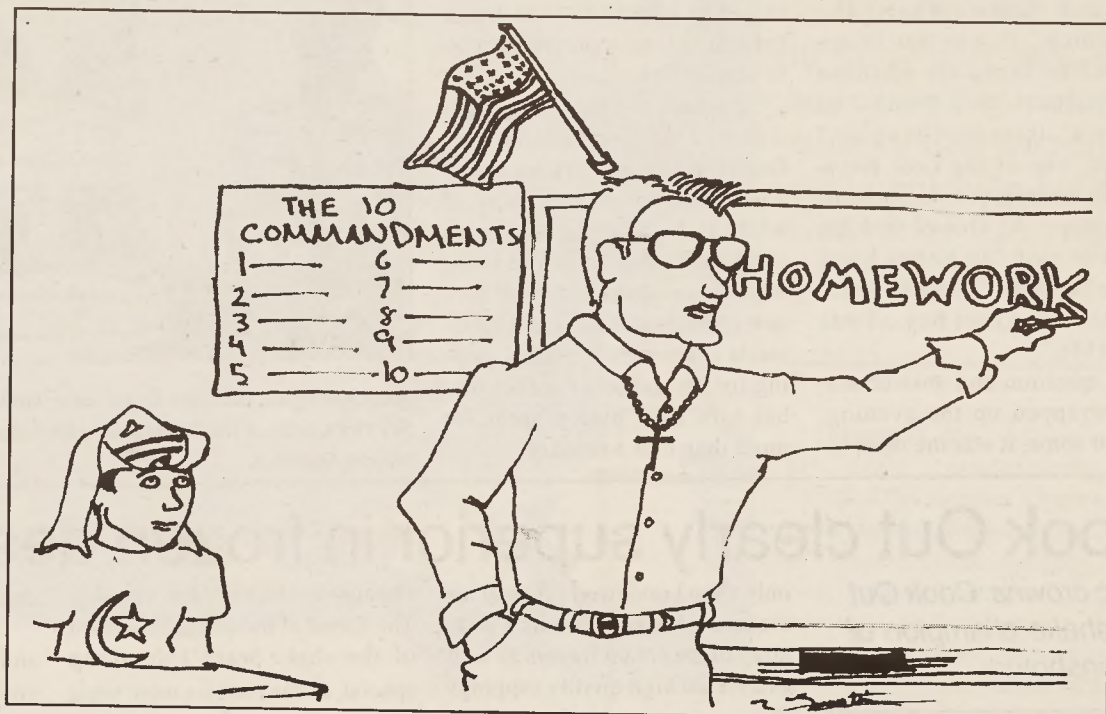
and controversial decision.

Why should we be forced to confront our religious beliefs at school? Though schools were originally religiously based they now serve as institutes to learn science, math, and history- education on which faith is superior. Religious classes are optional in most school systems. If a student wants to focus on religion he or she should take a religious class or do it privately, as not to offend others.

Since school systems offer such options, there is no point in hanging the Ten Commandments. There is absolutely nothing to be gained by such a display. This action would further segregate our school. During the 1960s, many people struggled to integrate our schools. However, such an action would merely undo all of their work by once again bringing personal beliefs into the school system. The only difference between now and then is that in the 1960s it was beliefs about race. Now, it concerns the beliefs of various religions.

Think about the student who is Hindu or Muslim and feels ashamed that he or she does not believe in something that, by hanging the commandments, is deemed correct.

We fought to protect our basic rights in the past. We should not have to do so again.



Lauenstein graphic

Nationalistic media produces prejudiced news coverage

The media overlooks the "other side" of the story in an effort to instill patriotism.

By Ciani Smith
Staff Writer

When you only get one side of the story and risk being labeled unpatriotic and ungrateful if you want to examine a different point of view, it is extremely difficult to take an informed stand on an issue.

The question now is where does the mainstream media (CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, etc.) fit in to all of this? They are the reporters and interpreters of world events for the public. Biased and ratings-hungry, these are the places where, like it or not, many people get their news.

Before September 11th, their bias was not so obvious because most Americans simply did not care about real news events.

Just last summer, we clung to every meaningless word of Gary Condit's interview with Connie Chung. But why didn't we get an in depth report about other things that were happening in the world? What could make a story about a philandering politician and a missing woman more important than everything else that was happening? The answer: A greedy media and a superficial populace.

But now, we are learning our lesson and paying more collective attention to world affairs. For the first time, most Americans are edu-

cated and becoming interested in politics and are realizing that they are actually in a position to do something for someone else. Americans of this generation are finally, painfully aware of the fact that what happens "over there" affects them, too.

I think that this budding intellectualism and involvement needs to be encouraged and further developed. This is how the media should play its role, as an unbiased, non-corporate source for information and analysis of what is happening in our world today. Perhaps I am just an idealist, but it is possible. Look at National Public Radio.

NPR's programming is creative, objective, and, most importantly, informative. They have the ability to work outside of the box because they do not rely solely on corporations for financial support. This is the only way for a truly neutral news organization to exist. Because they do not have to answer to the corporations or the government, they have the freedom, without fear of losing the all-important money, to report the facts. The facts are precisely what we need right now as we fight a war against something as intangible as terrorism, in a country that we don't understand, far removed from our daily lives.

Sadly, NPR's model of even reporting and avoidance of sensationalism is definitely the exception, not the rule.

Starting with Bush's address to a Joint Session of Congress, the



Peebles graphic

mainstream media has jumped on the pro-Bush, pro-war bandwagon and has not let go. This has led the government to take additional liberties such as the repression of the infamous Osama bin Laden propaganda videos. Maybe they do have secret messages in them, but I find it hard to believe that a group with the technology and organization to hijack four planes

would use those videos as a major method of communication. Yes, I do agree that national security must be protected, but it is also the media's job to inform the people of what the government is doing overseas, because we cannot see for ourselves.

Personally, I want to know what our government is doing in Afghanistan and elsewhere. If I wake

up a decade or two from now, and discover that there has been a huge wrong done to some people, I don't want to have been one of the ones who ignored it. I don't want to have their blood on my conscience.

Perhaps it is because growing up in the information age has spoiled me, but I believe that I have a right to be informed.