

Middle school teachers address Clinton scandal

BY ANNE CORBETT
STAFF WRITER

Amid the media storm of controversy surrounding the president's alleged sexual relationship with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky, the reactions of one group of Americans have been overlooked — the children.

Current events are a staple of social studies curriculum, but the recent presidential controversy sent N.C. teachers scrambling for ways to discuss the situation appropriately.

The state-mandated curriculum for North Carolina calls for teachers to bring related current events into classroom discussions.

Jeanne Haney, a middle school social studies consultant for the N.C. Department of Public Instruction, said the department had not issued any guidelines for teachers to follow when discussing the issue.

"We rely upon the professionalism of our teachers," she said. "They know the age level of their students."

Haney said teachers take care not to let class discussions stray into areas parents might find objectionable or inappropriate for their children.

"Our folks are very sensitive to the community that they serve," she said. "I don't think you'll see the talk-show syndrome in our schools."

She also said teachers would use the issue to talk about relevant subjects.

"I suspect this would be an appropriate time to look at how impeachment works," Haney said.

Above all, she said, N.C. teachers would not let discussion of the issue get out of hand or become inappropriate for the age of their students.

"Our teachers are trying to be very professional and responsible," she said.

"Our folks are very sensitive to the community. ... I don't think you'll see the talk-show syndrome in our schools."

JEANNE HANEY
social studies consultant for the N.C. Department of Public Instruction

Several middle school teachers said they did not intend to talk about the issue at all.

"I don't do a lot with current events," said Paulette Scott a social studies teacher at Grey Culbreth Middle School in Chapel Hill.

She said she would only address the issue if a student brought it up.

Alicia Zucker, a social studies teacher at Smithfield Middle School, only uses current events that deal with the subjects she is teaching in class. "We deal with Africa and Asia," she said.

Zucker said she was glad her curriculum did not include American government because she did not want to have to discuss the situation in class.

"I'm lucky enough that I haven't had to deal with it," she said. "I don't want to deal with it."

She said she was also grateful that none of her students have brought it up in class.

"They don't bring it up," she said. "Anything else, I would talk with them about, but this is a really touchy issue."

Zucker said she thinks it is more appropriate for parents to talk about this subject with their children than to discuss it in class.

"I think I would tell them to talk with their parents," she said. "The way parents are these days, you could get sued."

Death-row inmates place hope in appeals

■ Raleigh's Central Prison currently has 175 prisoners waiting on death row.

BY VALERIE BREZINA
STAFF WRITER

Death-row inmates at Central Prison in Raleigh maintain hope in spite of their impending fate.

Nevertheless, the death of a fellow inmate does affect their actions.

"The tension increases somewhat as the date to someone's execution approaches, but there is very little outward emotion," said Capt. F. S. Walker, the officer in charge of Central Prison.

"This is probably to keep their hopes up. They keep hoping there will be a way out of it, and they don't want to be belligerent and mess up their record."

At 2 a.m. Friday, Ricky Lee Sanderson, sentenced to death for the 1985 abduction and murder of a 16-year-old Lexington girl, breathed his last breath in Central Prison in Raleigh.

Walker said Sanderson could have appealed the case but decided against it. "He (Sanderson) could have appealed if he had so desired, but he thought his decision was the right thing to do," Walker said.

"He thought this was what he had to do in order to right himself with God and his religion."

Despite Sanderson's death, Walker said executions are relatively uncommon in Central Prison.

"We've only had nine executions since the death penalty came back in 1976," he said.

Patty McQuillan, public information officer for the N.C. Department of Corrections, said although there are numerous inmates on death row, actual executions are an exception to the rule.

"The inmates have natural appeals coming to them," McQuillan said.

"There are 175 people on death row in Central Prison, and some of them have been there a very long time. The inmate who has been there the longest is Norris Carlton Taylor, and he was sentenced on July 30, 1979."

Barry McNeil, special deputy attorney general, head of the Capital Litigation sector, agreed executions were unusual due to the elaborate appeals process set up for death-row inmates.

"There are 10 steps in the appeals process, and only until an inmate has completed the entire round of state and federal proceedings, or else has decided to go no further in the appeals process, is he actually up for execution," he said.

"The first stage is the trial and sentencing stage, then the direct appeal stage, in which the sentence is subject to automatic review by the N.C. Supreme Court," McNeil said. "These two stages are automatic; the inmate cannot elect to drop the direct appeal."

McNeil said Sanderson only went through the mandatory first two stages of the process and then elected to drop all further appeals.

Walker said an inmate scheduled for execution gains some special privileges.

"About ten days prior to execution, the prisoner is granted telephone privileges so they can talk to family friends, attorneys and clergy. They are also granted one special last meal."

Local socialists fight executions

BY JASON MORRELL
STAFF WRITER

The recent execution of Ricky Lee Sanderson impelled one local group to take action against what it said was a tool of oppression.

The Chapel Hill branch of the International Socialist Organization (ISO) is attempting to build a chapter of the national campaign to end capital punishment.

Members expressed their views on the topic at a meeting last week, just before the execution.

"The way the death penalty is used is 100 percent wrong," said Jonathan Wexler, a member of the group.

Wexler, a 1997 UNC graduate, expressed the socialist sentiment in a speech at the meeting.

Wexler said capital punishment was a tool used by the government that propagated racism and class oppression.

"(Capital punishment) is a sign of the barbarism in our society," he said. "It's never been used as a defense but as a weapon."

To support his argument, Wexler pointed to facts relating to the death penalty.

He said Texas was the leading state in executing prisoners, but its crime rate has increased five times the national average.

Annabel Bower, a member from Raleigh, shared Wexler's view on the issue.

"We believe the death penalty is

racist, discriminates against poor people and doesn't act as a deterrent to crime," Bower said.

"Innocent people will die and have died because of it."

Branch organizer Joseph Tomaras of Durham described the death penalty as a brutal tool that society needed to unconditionally oppose.

He said bringing about change called for active involvement to force the government to take action against capital punishment.

"Our job as socialists is not to make policy programs. We need to fight for basic rights," Tomaras said. "So we need to mobilize people to fight for these rights."

The national campaign to end capital punishment is designed so members do not have to be socialists or part of the ISO, Bower said.

"(The campaign) works in coalition with all other groups that don't support the death penalty," she said.

The ISO is an active organization that exercises mass protests instead of prayer or lobbying, Bower said.

"It's necessary to mobilize a large amount of people in a very public way," she said. "We want to be noisy."

Group members said people interested in fighting the death penalty must join the campaign to make the force even stronger.

"Doing this stuff is really non-glamorous," Bower said.

"But the most important thing you can do is recruit more people."

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