

SunSentinel OPINION

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SUN SENTINEL EDITORIAL

Sending women back to those bad old days

Bad politics is viral these days, so Senate President Wilton Simpson, who's running for agriculture commissioner, wants Florida to emulate the Texas law that bans virtually all abortions. Other legislatures ruled by Republicans threaten to follow.

For now, the egg farmer from Pasco County probably has the votes. Consensus is ancient history in Tallahassee. Extremism is the new credo.

In one account, Simpson indicated he might not go so far as the Texas enforcement scheme that depends on lawsuits filed by private citizens.

But the main concept — no abortion past the questionable “fetal heartbeat” stage at six weeks — is bad enough even without turning Florida into a snitch-on-your-neighbor state like Cuba, China or the former East Germany.

The law is at war with legal precedent and with medical science, which does not even consider a fetus viable until the 24th week of pregnancy. That's the point where *Roe v. Wade*, the national precedent, holds that the government acquires a legitimate interest in the pregnancy.

Simpson and his collaborators should be careful about what they're wishing for; this could be the step that ends on a political banana peel.

Politicians who profess “right to life” have had an advantage in the mindset of people who care about nothing else.

The large majority of pro-choice Americans, including 68% of Florida voters, have not been single-issue voters.

But now, more will be. Freedom of choice is now the overriding issue even for moderates, lest Florida's women not become handmaidens to the ambitions of (mostly male) politicians. Simpson has offered the Democrats an issue they can't refuse.

Every seat in the Legislature will be

at stake in 2022, a redistricting year. The governor's office and Cabinet will be on the ballot.

As many as five of the seven Supreme Court justices will be seeking retention, asking the voters to say yes or no to six-year terms.

That matters because of the court's 1989 decision that Florida's Constitution protects abortion rights more fundamentally than even *Roe v. Wade*.

“Florida's privacy provision is clearly implicated in a woman's decision of whether or not to continue her pregnancy,” Justice Leander Shaw wrote in that opinion. “We can conceive of few more personal or private decisions concerning one's body that one can make in the course of a lifetime, except perhaps the decision of the terminally ill in their choice of whether to discontinue necessary medical treatment.”

All seven justices agreed to that principle for adult women in the case *In Re T. W.* Three dissented in part over whether it should apply to minors like the Lake County high school student who won the case.

The right-to-life lobby went gunning for Shaw in the 1990 retention election, but he won with nearly 60% of the vote. Four other targeted justices also scored in the 60s their next time up.

It's a different court now, packed with far-right justices who have been repealing any precedent they don't like, including fairness in the death penalty and the rights of plaintiffs against big business. Of the five eligible for retention next year, Jorge Labarga is alone in respecting precedent.

Unless they can assure the voters otherwise, it is questionable whether freedom of choice is safe with Florida justices Charles Canaday, Ricky Polston, John D. Couriel

and Jamie Grosshans.

Erasing the national precedent of *Roe v. Wade* is, of course, the point of the Texas law banning abortion before most women even know they're pregnant.

Cunningly, it also attempts to prevent the federal courts from interfering by designating private citizens rather than state agents to enforce it through private litigation. At \$10,000 from the defendant for every successful suit they file, it will encourage bounty-hunting by opportunists and their lawyers.

The purpose is to terrorize Texas abortion providers into shutting down, as they have, to await what now seems like a needlessly distant outcome in the U.S. Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, back-alley abortions are once again the only recourse for Texas women who can't afford to travel out of that primitive jurisdiction.

As Chief Justice John Roberts warned in dissent and as even the majority agreed, it wasn't a final decision on the merits.

It bears considering by anyone else who would emulate Texas lawmakers what a lawless world their decision portends.

Will red states authorize private civil actions against pastors who conduct gay marriages? Might blue states authorize bounty-hunting against those who picket abortion clinics? Could police forces be replaced by citizens on contingency commissions?

Roe v. Wade is still constitutional law. Texas must not be allowed to evade it indirectly. Neither should Florida.

No matter what private malice they may hold for *Roe*, Justices Brett Kavanaugh, Neil Gorsuch and Amy Coney Barrett, all of whom recently expressed respect for *stare decisis* — meaning “to stand for things decided” — must consider the consequences. So, of course, should the court's

senior reactionaries, Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito, even though their hostility to *Roe* is an old story.

As Justice Sonia Sotomayor said, it was “stunning” for them to invoke jurisdictional technicalities as an excuse to let Texas get away with it for now.

Writing for herself and justices Stephen Breyer and Elena Kagan, she accused Texas of “a breathtaking act of defiance — of the Constitution, of this Court's precedents, and of the rights of women seeking abortions throughout Texas.”

Such is the fate that Simpson wishes on the women in Florida. His rationale bears close attention.

“As an adoptive child myself,” he said, “it's important to me that we do everything we can to promote adoption and prevent abortion.”

Promoting adoption is a legitimate function of a democratic government. But enforced pregnancy is as wrong as the former one-child rule of a dictatorial China.

The Sun Sentinel Editorial Board consists of Editorial Page Editor Steve Bousquet, Deputy Editorial Page Editor Dan Sweeney, and Editor-in-Chief Julie Anderson. Editorials are the opinion of the Board and written by one of its members or a designee. To contact us, email at letters@sun-sentinel.com.

CORRECTION

An editorial Tuesday incorrectly stated the Florida Justice Institute filed a friend of the court brief in a Supreme Court case affecting corporate defendants. It was the Florida Justice Reform Institute, not the Florida Justice Institute, that filed the brief.

ANOTHER VIEWPOINT

Learning to think critically is not being indoctrinated



By Payden Alder

For years, Republicans have increasingly looked on higher education disparagingly, and that distaste for universities has found a warm home in the MAGA movement. When Republican leaders like Donald Trump and Gov. Ron DeSantis blast critical race theory, they

are really playing to constituents' fears of radical indoctrination.

As a student, I'm baffled by the claims Trump and DeSantis make about my education, because it's exactly that — an education, not indoctrination — that has been my experience in the “ivory tower.” I say this as a student of probably the most hated discipline, the burning furnace that powers the supposed indoctrination camps otherwise known as universities — the humanities.

My education did change my beliefs and values, and many might cite this as evidence of my indoctrination. But it wasn't indoctrination that reshaped my worldview, it was exposure to people and ideas my upbringing on a small farm in rural America couldn't give me.

I think the difference between indoctrination and education is the way we are taught. Indoctrination is devotional learning, it teaches all the reasons why you *should* believe. This is why we call religious education devotional education because it teaches us to believe. Education, unlike indoctrination, is not devotional, it is critical. It examines not only why we *should* believe, but equally as important why we *shouldn't*. And while devotional learning might be appropriate for places of worship, I agree with most Republicans, it has no place in our universities.

The ironic thing is that almost all of my college professors agree with them as well. They see it as a duty of the teacher to examine every position critically, letting the arguments do the speaking and the students the deciding. Disagreement and debate have been encouraged in my college experience because it showed the teacher that students were thinking critically. I personally felt safer expressing a dissenting opinion in the classroom than I did at my own family gatherings.

I won't deny that, in some classrooms, dissenting opinions are not well received, but in my experience, at my little-known state school, it was the exception, not the rule. A much more common experience I had as a young conservative from a highly religious town in rural America was discomfort learning about compelling arguments that disagreed with my

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perspective of the world. A good education will challenge even beliefs that hold a core place in our identities, and I can understand why a young student might see such a challenge as a personal attack. It feels personal.

And look, I know this is all anecdotal, but my professors come from all across the country, some with small-town backgrounds like me. They have taught at previous colleges and attended graduate schools all across the country, and their experiences have been the same. Almost all teachers at every institution they studied or taught at hold it as a duty of the teacher to teach critically, not devotionally.

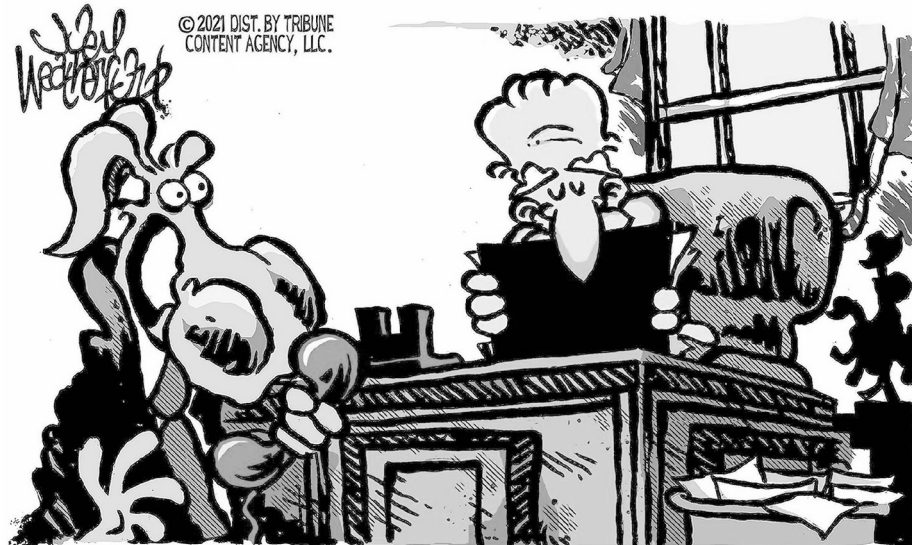
But in spite of all of this, for me, it wasn't the classroom that had most profoundly changed my beliefs and values, it was interacting with people of diverse backgrounds. These experiences allowed me to see past hateful stereotypes I once held. As I got to know people from all different ethnicities, religions and sexual and gender identities, I was able to see them as I see myself — as a human being who wants nothing more than to live life without harming anyone else along the way.

I got to meet people from low-income backgrounds who would never have had the chance to go to school had it not been for federal student aid. Most importantly, I saw how the taxpayer investment in these students was going to pay off because of their hard work and dedication. These are people who will give back to society far more than society has invested in them.

It was learning to love and empathize with people very different from myself that really changed me. It was listening to the perspectives of others that forced me to see reality through a lens my small religious town sheltered me from.

After all, if liberal college professors were brainwashing our students in droves, wouldn't they also be able to get those same students to read the syllabus?

Payden Alder is a senior at Utah Valley University and lives in Salt Lake City, Utah.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Packed stadiums an insult

I could not believe the number of people in the stands at the Miami-Alabama football game on Saturday.

Thousands and thousands of unmasked fans (in Atlanta). It was an insult to doctors, nurses and respiratory therapists who have been working 12-hour days in full protective gear, taking care of unvaccinated COVID-19 patients dying in ICU wards across the South. We are in a crisis and it looks like nobody really cares.

Diane Miller, Plantation

Congress doesn't work

Congress needs to do its job as a check on the executive branch. Members collect paychecks and do nothing. They have ceded power to the clueless, starting with Trump's agreement with the Taliban, which he recently lauded with usual over-the-top adjectives.

Congress is abdicating its responsibility as a check on presidents who may or may not have the capability to make such important decisions, whether Democrat or Republican. How do we get a Marjorie Taylor Greene or Matt Gaetz in Congress? How do we get a person to run for Congress such as County Commissioner Dale Holness, who's supported by ethically challenged officeholders?

We demand more vetting from game show hosts than we do for people who run for office. This has to change.

Another thing: Democrats need to grow a backbone and fight fire with fire by packing the U.S. Supreme Court, abolishing the filibuster and letting Sen. Joe Manchin know that his views are worthless in today's climate. Tiresome doesn't begin to describe this irksome person.

Emogene Keffer, Plantation

A Supreme disgrace

Re: Biden blasts Supreme Court's decision not to block Texas abortion ban
Five Supreme Court justices who

presumably know constitutional law have proven that a first-year law student can dismantle and shatter their concepts. They not only do not know the law, but they have allowed Texas, a state, to usurp federal law.

They are a disgrace to the U.S., political fanatics who care not one iota about our country and the hardships faced by women in America. They have proven worthless as providers of jurisprudence and truth.

Morris Fostoff, Boca Raton

Sucking up to developers

I've lived in Fort Lauderdale long enough to have fought for Smoker Park (lost) and Hardy Park (won). Now I fight for the promised One Stop Shop. Consultants recommended years ago that the space be used as a park. Residents were promised a green oasis in an increasingly overdeveloped concrete jungle downtown.

Certain commissioners now propose to renege on those promises and give this beautiful site with its mature trees over to a concert venue developer. Shame on them for betraying Fort Lauderdale residents.

Fort Lauderdale is unabashedly cavalier about giving precious green space to developers. One suspects behind-the-scenes shenanigans are responsible. I find this apparently entrenched practice of disregarding public needs for green space and sucking up to developers and their lobbyists appalling.

Cara Campbell, Fort Lauderdale

Don't sell out constituents

Residents living adjacent to what was to be a community park now hear it will become a concert venue and they are up in arms. How can the city not follow through with an agreed upon master plan? Something smells wrong: Politicians and developers selling out the interests of their constituents.

Larry Forman, Fort Lauderdale

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