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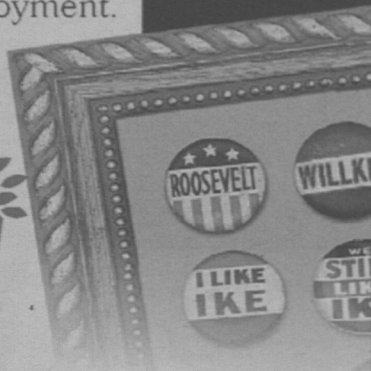
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Views: Welcome Back to the 18th Century

As one of the millions who clung to a glimmer of hope that the American electorate might come to an insightful realization about George W. Bush, sadly I – along with the rest of us – now have to deal with being held hostage to the most monstrous administration in American history. As a history teacher, I say that with a bit of expertise on the subject.

It took less than a day after Bush was re-elected for the Texas School Board to order an enormous supply of new textbooks on subjects ranging from history to sex education. Why should this matter to those of us hiding out in VT? Most textbooks distributed in the US are printed and approved by the Texas School Board. In many states below the Mason/Dixon line it is currently illegal to teach evolution in public schools.

Having taught history for four years, I can honestly say that the information in high school history books distributed in public schools already reads like a propaganda ad for the religious right. Although the names throughout history are accurate, the events are slanted to the point of being primarily fictional.

For example, I'd be willing to bet that not-one student in the US public school system could explain the true reason the Revolutionary War broke out. The bottom line is that George Washington, in terms of personal wealth, was the Bill Gates of his time. And Samuel Adams, along with a handful of other elitist propagandists, spun the British taxation story saying that it unfairly was bankrupting every American citizen. When in fact the only Americans paying extremely high taxes to the British were the super wealthy.

However, as we've seen in the past several months, it only takes a small group of highly vocal people to rally the masses by staying on message – whether or not the message has a grain of truth in it.

But the Puritan right wing's religious crusade didn't end with abolishing the teaching of evolution. Sex-ed has been taught in public schools for over two decades. But thanks to Bush and his team of moral crusaders the language has been changed to gender-specific, opposite-sex terms only.

paul
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Deleting the teaching of contraception and adding abstinence in its place have also been directed. These changes have invigorated the religious right to come out voting in flocks with bibles in hand. Which begs the question what exactly are they so afraid of?

The writing is already on the wall that *Roe v Wade* will be overturned as soon as a few more radical conservatives are appointed to the Supreme Court. Apparently, the separation of church and state was abolished along with much of

us, using the words 'radical Christian extremists.' And who in their right mind could blame them?

Of course, lying and deceiving the American public for huge profits is nothing new. And the complacency Americans show over these numerous atrocities throughout our history is horrifying, as long as the countries we invade and the people we maim and kill have dark skin. After all, those people aren't Christians, so god apparently has no problem with us killing them.

One can only hope that somehow, someday, humanity in its many religious denominations will realize that we're all the same and all religions have the same monotheistic concepts based on the same basic principles.

Thomas Jefferson said, "Democracy can never work without an informed electorate." No truer words have ever been spoken. Let this election be a wake up call to those of us who still remember that this country has (at least the

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our individual rights contained within the Constitution when the PATRIOT Act was passed. To protect us from terrorism, of course.

During the three presidential debates Kerry never mentioned the horrific number of civilian deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan the US government is solely responsible for. As of this writing, the civilian death count in Iraq is 130,000. Many cities and villages have virtually been erased from existence. Yet Bush's campaign was centered around 'moral values' and protection from terrorism. Prior to the US invading and mass killing of the Iraqi people, there were no terrorists in Iraq, no threats against the US, and no impending danger.

By using the words 'Muslim extremists' the administration has convinced a frightened majority of the US population that we must act now. Rest assured, their Middle Eastern counterparts are saying exactly the same about

remains of) a constitution. If we don't work together now, gays can look forward to a return of the days where they will be kept in asylums to contain their illness, and women will see their right to choose erased from the history books, in the name of god.

Madalyn Murray O'Hair, where are you now???

I ask that you join me in forming a grassroots effort to battle the religious right in an attempt to reclaim our basic Constitutional rights. We can begin by relentlessly mass mailing or emailing congressman and senators across the country and insist that our voices be heard. If you'd like to get involved forming such a group and helping with a strategy, I can be emailed at: PCookBurlington@aol.com. ▼

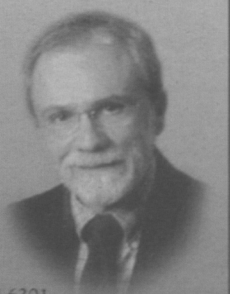
Paul Cook is an activist / writer / comedian and a contributor to *Frontiers Magazine* and *The Progressive*. He lives in Burlington.

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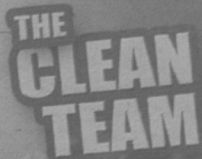
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