

# EDITORIAL

## Uncertainty

All doubts must be resolved before execution carried out

We have long opposed the death penalty, and growing numbers of people both in the United States and worldwide are joining in that opposition. The finality of the sentence — you can't bring a wrongly executed person back to life — alone is a strong argument against its use. In addition, many people agree that a society can't legitimately sit in judgment of criminals, even killers, if its officials feel justified in taking the same action for which others are being condemned.

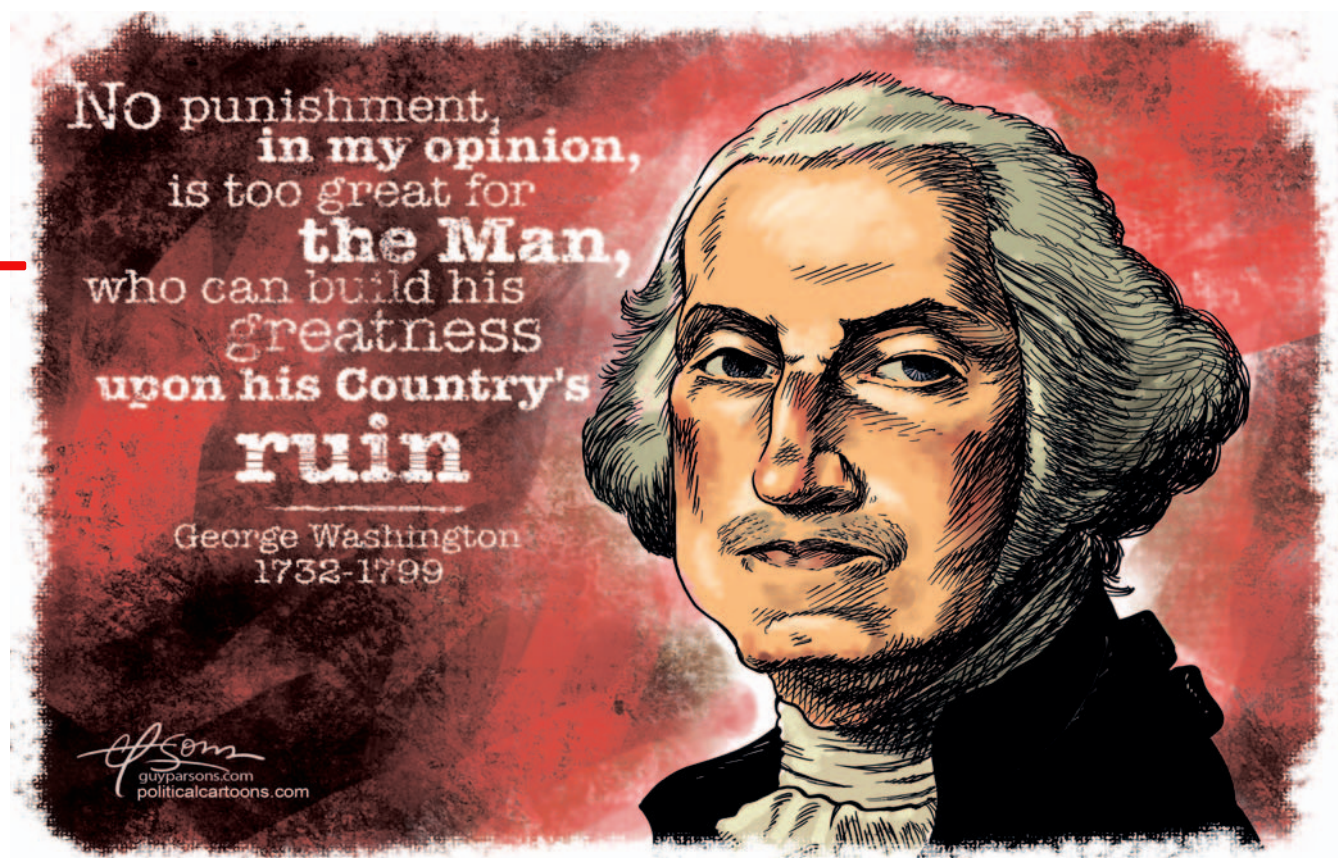
For those reasons and more, most of the world's countries have abandoned executions, and the United Nations several times has passed resolutions calling for a worldwide moratorium on executions, although those resolutions are non-binding. Several U.S. states either have imposed their own bans or declared moratoriums, often citing the fact that over the past 50 years, nearly 200 condemned inmates have been exonerated after new evidenced proved their innocence. Death penalty opponents cite several cases in which innocent people were wrongly executed before exculpatory information came to light, or because that evidence did not convince courts to reconsider the cases.

All this comes as growing numbers of voices call for a review of the capital murder conviction of Melissa Lucio, who in 2008 was found guilty of killing her 2-year-old daughter Mariah the year before. Lucio insisted that the toddler fell down some stairs while the family was moving from one Harlingen apartment to another, but officials said the girl's body had signs of previous injuries, which they said were signs of abuse. Lucio was known to have been abused herself, and substantial files built by the state department of Child Protective Services, which made several visits to her home, indicate no evidence that she ever was violent toward any of the 11 other children she had at the time of her arrest — she was pregnant with twins at that time — and those children insist she never hurt them.

Lucio is scheduled to die April 27, and unfortunately it's a bad time to stop a planned execution. Dozens of state and local officials are on this year's election ballots, and in Texas most candidates are eager to show they are tough on crime. Tens of thousands of people have signed on to petitions asking Cameron County District Attorney Luis Saenz to withdraw her execution warrant, to seek another court review of the case and even for Saenz to recuse himself from the case. Saenz has indicated that after reviewing the case he believes her death is justified. The case likely won't affect his political fortunes regardless of what happens; he is not up for reelection this year and he did not prosecute the case, which was legislated when Armando Villalobos was district attorney.

Regardless of the facts of this case, however, we believe this nation's overall use of the death penalty needs review. Although elected officials still seem to like it, it's obviously losing public support. Even in Texas, which at one time killed up to 30 inmates a year, juries have preferred to request life sentences since they were given that option in 2005.

It's time to make the public's aversion to executions official, and consider repealing the death penalty, at least in this state.



## A Valentine's Day love story

Like many of our festivals, Valentine's Day has a murky beginning. One of my favorite theories about the feast day of St. Valentine is that Feb. 14 was

**LOUISE BUTLER**



**MY TURN**

considered the day when birds chose their mates for the year. This is in keeping with my Valentine's Day love story.

My husband and I enjoy playing golf. We usually play at Los Lagos Golf Club in Edinburg. As you might guess, with a name like Los Lagos, there is plenty of water. It is the water

that really brightens our day. If you have water you have waterfowl, and that means a good home for Lord Nelson.

I am in love with Lord Nelson, a white pelican, who lives in one or another of the ponds that dot the golf course. I call him Lord Nelson (the British vice-admiral who lost his arm in the Battle of Santa Cruz de Tenerife) because the pelican, like his namesake, has only one wing. I don't know if my pelican also carries the real Lord Nelson's additional characteristics of only one eye and constant womanizing (does my pelican have his own Lady Hamilton?), but he is a handsome bird. He first came to our attention

almost eight years ago. The ponds of Los Lagos are filled with white pelicans during the migrations. They form fluffy pillows of white as they swim together. They form a graceful circle and then, in unison, dip their enormous beaks into the water to scoop up fish that are essentially trapped in a sea of open mouths. Pelicans are equally beautiful in the air and only become awkward when they waddle across the land. It is on the land, slow, heavy and unable to maneuver, that pelicans are vulnerable. I can only assume that it was in one of these landlocked moments that Lord Nelson had an encounter with a predator. He escaped, but with a badly damaged wing.

The first day we noticed him, he was dragging his wing in the water. What is worse, as frequently happens in the animal kingdom, he was being abandoned by his fellow birds. So here was a beautiful pelican, disabled, hunting on his own, unable to fly. It did not look good. Then, he disappeared.

We did not see the pelican for several weeks. Then, as the other birds began leaving, we spotted him. The damaged part of his wing had been removed. Whether by nature or by human intervention, the lower part of the wing had disappeared. The "how" may be a mystery, but the "what" was obvious. There was the bird with the upper part of the wing intact, though carried at an elevated, slightly skewed angle. He could not

fly, but he could swim and fish. It was at this second sighting that I started calling him Lord Nelson. We looked for him every week and seeing him was personally joyful. Weeks passed, so did months, and he was always there. When we were away for any period, we looked for him as a marker of permanence. He became our "welcome home."

There have been scares. He disappeared from his usual pond once and we did not see him for the longest time. We were sure time and circumstances had caught up with Lord Nelson. Then he showed up at another pond on the golf course. Clearly, he had made the dangerous trip overland for some good reason, which he did not share with us. He now shares the ponds with the pelicans that show up in droves during spring and fall, though he still tends to stay a bit removed, either by his choice or theirs.

I am in love with Lord Nelson. I love what he represents. He is dignified, defiant, and — against all odds — thriving. He refuses to give in to disability, or the fortunes of war. In the words of William Ernest Henley, his head is bloody but unbowed.

A part of love is admiration, and I admire Lord Nelson. Share a little love and keep the faith.

Louise Butler is a retired educator and published author who lives in Edinburg. She writes for The Monitor's Board of Contributors.

## YOUR VOICES

### Defining democracy

**Editor:**

Of all people on planet earth, there are none more boastful about their democracy than Americans. But folks who daily spend their time barefoot, slobbering and chained to a refrigerator are not really a free and democratic people.

Americans, aside from maybe knowing how to spell the word, know very little about exactly what made America a real democracy in the past, and what form of government we have chained ourselves to today.

Putting Black History Month on our calendars and pulling down Confederate statues in the South don't necessarily make us more democratic than we were yesterday. A beautiful rainbow coalition of empowered ethnicities can paint itself into a tyrannical corner just as easily as a snow-white party can. Consider, also, the following.

Daily watching The Price Is Right is not a democratic activity, even if the host wears a beard and the program employs women and blacks. Tuning in to daytime or late-night talk shows that promote celebrity careers won't get you any closer to the Promised Land.

Sports fandom, clearance shopping, binge-watching Netflix and making ignorant posts on social media won't make you a Founding Father either.

Sending your kids to school is not a democratic activity, unless you personally help mold the curriculum, monitor assignments, and show up at

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school board meetings.

Paying your taxes is not democracy in action, unless you show up to government budget hearings to let elected officials know how the money should be spent.

Voting does not define democracy either, unless you personally know the insides and outsides of people and issues you are voting for.

News reporters asking folks on the street for their opinion of things does not promote democracy either, especially when these types of words come out of their mouths: "I feel like everyone should be able to do what they want." Yikes, that barefoot guy got unchained from the refrigerator again!

**Kimball Shinkoskey**  
Woods Cross, Utah

### Wheelchair type Abbott's choice

**Editor:**

This is in response to Abel R. Moreno's letter to The Herald dated Feb. 3. Mr. Moreno seems to have a problem with Gov. Abbott's choice

of wheelchair.

Mr. Moreno, how we live our lives, what we wear, eat, drink, drive and where we live is our own personal choice. Some folks elect to wear their net worth on their fingers, around their neck, on their wrists and in the fancy cars they drive. Others choose to be humble and down to earth. To each his own. We all still have the freedom to choose.

Mr. Moreno mocked our governor and his mode of mobility. I assure you, poking fun at people with disabilities is not exactly the best way to win friends and influence people.

**José C. Coronado**  
Mission

### Goldberg criticized

**Editor:**

Whoopie Goldberg's suspension on The View should be permanent for her careless and thoughtless remarks about the Jewish Holocaust.

Sadly, in her world only "Black Lives Matter," and no other race has suffered as much. She forgets world history either by convenience or ignorance.

She can claim that her comments were taken out of context, but they are hers and she needs to own up to them. Sharon Osborne was cancelled from The Talk for less, yet Goldberg gets a pass due to the color of her skin and surely not for the content of her character, which coincidentally will get you a seat on the Supreme Court as well.

**Jake Longoria**  
Mission

**The Herald**

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