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August 12, 1999

Mr. Bryan Lamb, Chairman & CEO
C-Span
400 North Capitol Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

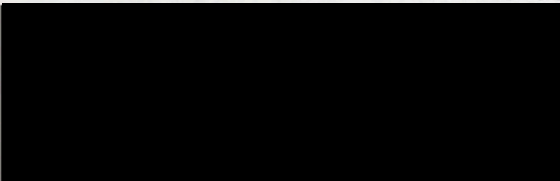
Dear Bryan:

Don't you think it's about time that C-Span quit helping to spread the lie that President Jefferson had a child with slave Sally Hemings?

He could have had any woman that he desired and it's absolutely ludicrous that he would want an ignorant slave woman.

In those days one drop of black blood and you were considered black. Do you actually think he would want to saddle his descendants with this drival?

Let's throw it in the trash were it belongs!



Salisbury, N.C. 28146

NORTH CAROLINA

Talk About Offensive

Until recently, Randolph Community College in Archer offered a course in Southern history, featuring the truth about slavery—that a majority of ex-slaves looked back on the experience without bitterness or resentment.

Instructor Jack Purdue wasn't merely expressing his private opinion on this subject. He cited the WPA ex-slave interviews collected in the 1930s as evidence that most slaves were satisfied with the life they led. In class, Purdue also expressed the scandalous opinion that the War was fought over the right of the South to determine its own political destiny. Twelve students were taking the course.

When the Associated Press found out what was going on, they published an indignant story, and the establishment shrieked with horror.

The college was bombarded with letters and phone calls.

The NAACP threatened to sue.

The chairman of the state committee of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights said, "How is the college letting this happen?"

A few days later—to the surprise of no one—the course was cancelled. The president of the college, peering out from under his desk, said, "We would never intentionally set up any class that is offensive to anyone in our community."

Imagine what would happen if a delegation of the Sons of Confederate Veterans went to the president and said, "The history department is teaching a course that depicts the South in an inaccurate and insulting way. We're offended."

They'd get rid of the course immediately, wouldn't they?

VIRGINIA

"Y" Not Tell The Truth?

The story spread nationwide, like a flu epidemic: *Nature*, a British medical journal, had just published a study proving *conclusively* that Thomas Jefferson had fathered a child by Sally Hemings, his slave.

South bashers, civil rights activists, Yankee historians, Clinton supporters, and the media immediately began to crow. According to the *Washington Post*, more than 295 editorials trumpeted the news—and at least 31 broadcasts.

• A *New York Times* headline proclaimed: "DNA Test Finds Evidence of Jefferson Child by Slave."

• The Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot* put it even more strongly: "DNA Link; Paternity Proved."

• The *Des Moines Register*, under a headline that read "Adulterer on Mt. Rushmore," called the story: "A boost for President Clinton in fighting impeachment...evidence proves Jefferson fathered at least one child by his slave."

• National Public Radio pontificated: "The proof is finally in. The President not only did have an illicit affair; he fathered at least one child with his lover."

The trouble with all these pronouncements? They weren't true.

In a November 9 letter to the *New York Times*, one of the authors of the *Nature* article wrote: "The genetic findings my collaborators and I reported...do not prove that Thomas Jefferson was the father of one of Sally Hemings's children. We never made that claim. Nor do we believe that the Y chromosome types we found in Hemings's descendant occur only in the Jefferson family...."

You can be certain that no more than a fraction of these newspapers ever printed a correction. As a consequence, one more ideological untruth becomes "fact" in the confused historical consciousness of the American people. ☛