

Slavery's delights illusory

By DENNIS ROGERS, Staff Writer

It's clear where my ancestors went wrong. Instead of working hard to keep a roof over their heads and the babies fed by farming a few acres of North Carolina dirt, they should have been slaves.

"Nearly every slave in the South enjoyed a higher standard of living than the poor whites of the South -- and had a much easier existence."

So says a ridiculous propaganda pamphlet called "Southern Slavery, As It Was" that claims to present the truth about slavery. The booklet was being used at a Wake County private school until the principal wisely called a halt to such silliness this week.

This kind of trash masquerading as historical fact shows how far some people will go to excuse the inexcusable. That its authors are closely involved with the goofy League of the South tells you all you need to know. The league, among other things, still advocates seceding from the United States. It is the same kind of revisionist pap being peddled by those wackos who claim the Holocaust wasn't all that bad.

A sample of the booklet's lunacy is this jewel of fractured history: "Slavery ... was not an adversarial relationship with pervasive racial animosity. ... It was a relationship based upon mutual affection and confidence."

I can just hear the happy slaves serenading Ol' Massa now, can't you? Have another mint julep, Miss Scarlett.

Mutual affection and confidence? I don't know about you, but if someone came to my village, put me in chains, crammed me into a ship and hauled me halfway around the world to a land where I, my wife and my children could be auctioned like cows, I think I'd be pretty darned adversarial and not at all affectionate.

Sounds to me like someone has watched "Gone With The Wind" a few too many times. Great movie, bad history. The truth is, slavery was the great sin, shame and ruination of my beloved South.

I love the South. I love Southern people, Southern food, Southern music, Southern women, Southern weather (except for August) and Southern history. I'm proud my great-great grandfather Warren Biggs served with the 1st and 10th North Carolina Artillery at Fort Fisher. I am proud that when his remains were reinterred in 2000, he was laid to rest with full Confederate Army honors.

But I am not proud of slavery. It was inhuman. It turned innocent people into chattel and shamed all who profited from it, whether they were Southern slave owners or Yankee slave traders. That it is condoned in the Bible, as the writers of the pamphlet labor to point out, is no excuse. Stoning is in the Bible and it's wrong, too.

Such twaddle as "slave life was ... a life of plenty, of simple pleasures" is profoundly embarrassing to those of us who have proudly defended our Southern heritage. There is much about our Southern history that we can be proud of -- including fighting an invading army -- but slavery, in all its forms and in all its times, is indefensible.

To those who claim to find even a flicker of decency in slavery, I have an offer: I'll feed, clothe and work you humanely. But first I'll sell your spouse and your children. And if you cause a fuss, I'll sell you, too.

Any takers?