

# An Integral Error

By Alex Taft

Can you find Nigeria on a map? Have you ever heard of the Janjaweed? They're a pastoralist, Jihadist militia that terrorizes the Christians of Nigeria and other parts of Northern Africa with brutal horseback raids. Isuwa Dogo, a former commissioner of Kaduna State in Nigeria, outlines the absolute horror of these Janjaweed raids: "They creep up on sleeping villagers at night and set houses on fire. They wait for the terrified, screaming occupants – defenceless men, women and children – to come running out for safety. Then, they systematically shoot, slash and machete them to death and melt into the bush like shadows" (Janjaweed in the). Terrible. It is utterly terrible to think that human beings would slaughter each other like animals over religious differences, and that it's still happening in Nigeria right now. The terror of the Janjaweed isn't a history lesson for the fearful people of Nigeria, it's happening right now. I can simply look up "Kaduna State" on Google, click on the news section, and find various Nigerian news articles with titles such as: "Gunmen kill soldier, abduct housewife, 8 children in Kaduna", "Attack leaves 12 dead, 2 injured in Kaduna", and "Catholic priest abducted, 11 murdered in Kaduna". As of writing this, all of these articles were published either 1 or 2 days ago.



So, how come barely any student at Oak Hills knows about this? In a study I personally conducted at Oak Hills, in which I asked a total of 104 randomly selected OHHS students "have you ever heard of the Janjaweed?", a staggering 0% of the students responded saying that they have heard of them. You'd think that more of us would be aware of a group of horseback Jihadists that are slaughtering North African Christians on a daily basis, but a staggeringly small number of Oak Hills students have even heard of the Janjaweed. Why is this? How come such a large and revolting problem is completely unheard of to a vast majority of OHHS students? The answer is simple: students simply aren't educated enough in geography. If one doesn't know the base knowledge of where Nigeria is on a map, one won't be aware of the Janjaweed that wreak havoc across the country, or any other alarming events that may take place in Nigeria. As a result, one will be unable to make any attempts at taking action against the issue, as one can't act when one doesn't even know what to act against. This is a universal truth; there are many problems across the world, such as the oppression of the Rohingya in Myanmar or the authoritarian rule of the Sudanese government, that many are completely unaware of due to the simple reasoning of not being well-versed in geography, and it's why geography needs to become a greater area of focus in education.

One may argue that geography doesn't need to be extra emphasized, as Americans are already aware of humanitarian crises across the world, such as the Taliban terror in Afghanistan. However, although it's true that U.S. citizens are aware of a few crises in other parts of the world, it's important to note that they're only aware of them because these issues appear in our media. The Taliban and the Janjaweed are two of a kind; they both carry out similar attacks with similar motives, the difference just being their location and their cultural backgrounds. The reason that so many more people know about the Taliban while having never heard of the Janjaweed is because the Taliban have come into conflict with the U.S., while the Janjaweed are based in areas of the world that the U.S. government isn't nearly as involved in. If things were left to knowledge determined by geography alone, far fewer people would know about the Taliban; they'd become just as unknown and obscure as the Janjaweed to us.

The key to solving many of the problems that plague this world is simply action. Long-term action for long-lasting solutions. When large numbers of people expose evil and demand action, international governments and organizations will be more pressed to listen and help put a stop to the evil through international pressure and support. The way to get large numbers of people more aware of humanitarian abuses in other countries so they can act is by making geography a more emphasized subject, because as previously stated, the first step to becoming more aware of issues across the globe is knowing where places on the globe are.

There is an integral error in the American education system, and all that's required to fix this error is implementing a greater focus on geography into our education.