

Weekly Review

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TWO DAVIDS: Broder and Brooks weigh in on Democratic doings. 4E



TEXAS | HISTORY

How many political novices does it take to ...?

■ Kinky Friedman's fans might want to look at the history of novelty gubernatorial candidates.

By GREGG CANTRELL
SPECIAL TO THE STAR-TELEGRAM

Back when Kinky Friedman first announced his gubernatorial aspirations, I had a friend who dismissed him as a

"joke candidate." Certainly Kinky has told his share of jokes in the course of the campaign, and his opponents have tried to portray him as something of a joke himself.

But Kinky has captured the imagination of many Texans, although he still lags badly in the polls. At this point, his fans are banking on his bring-

ing large numbers of new, young voters into the electorate, and on Republican-turned-independent Carole Keeton Strayhorn and Republican Gov. Rick Perry splitting the GOP vote to such an extent as to make Friedman's election possible.

It will be an uphill battle, but if Texas history counts for

anything, Kinky can take comfort in the knowledge that we do have examples of "joke candidates" actually winning. Alas, what happened once they were in office wasn't very pretty.

In 1914, a political newcomer from Temple named James E. Ferguson announced his candidacy for governor.

Ferguson was a successful banker, lawyer and businessman but was virtually unknown beyond the confines of Bell County.

He proved to be flamboyant and charismatic, and he soon began traveling the state wearing a black felt hat and calling himself "Farmer Jim." A stem-winding orator, he

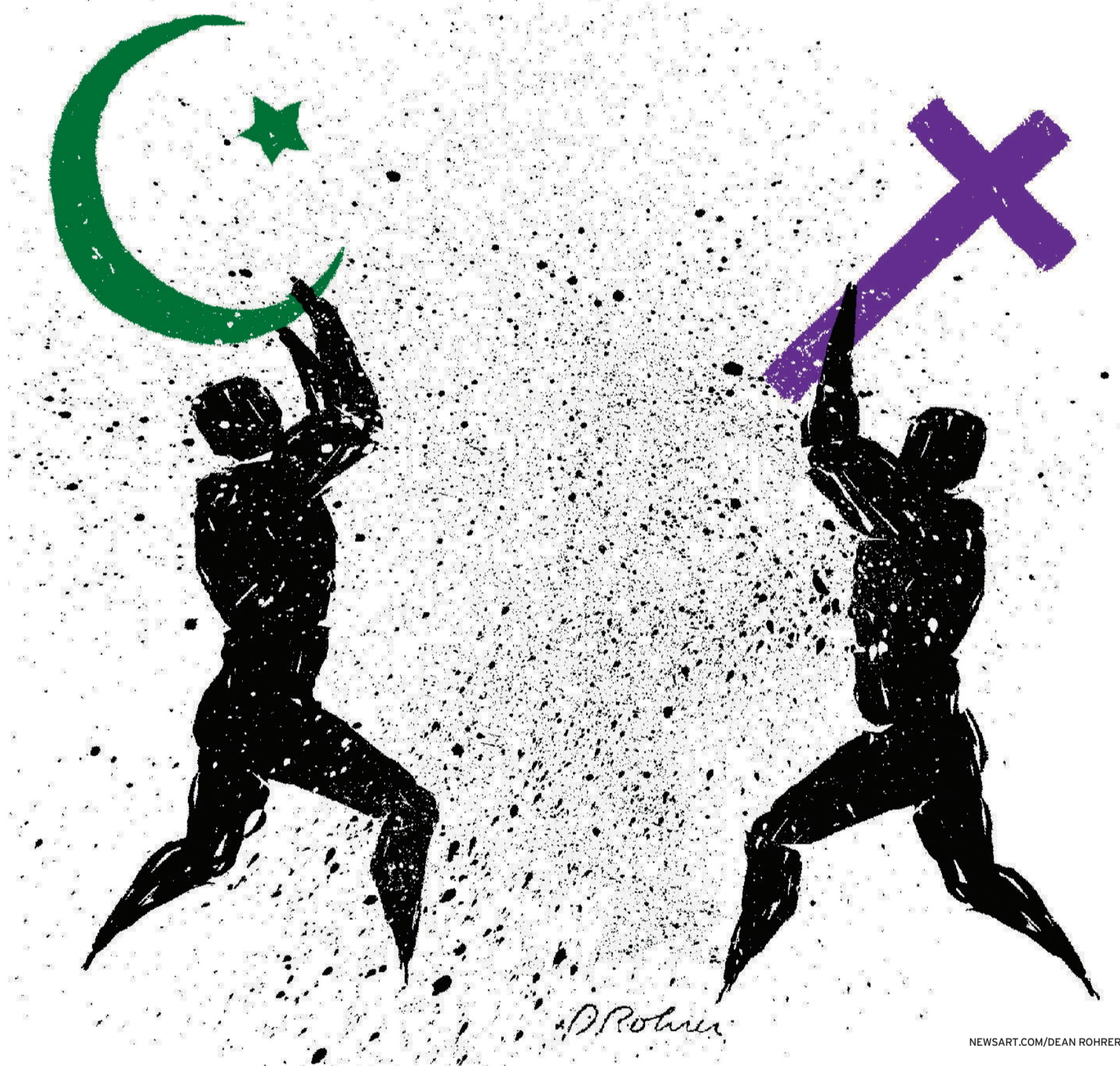
promised to cap the rents that landlords could charge to tenant farmers — a popular cause in a poor, rural state. On most other issues, he remained purposefully vague.

Ferguson won by 40,000

More on HISTORY on 5E

Gregg Cantrell is a Texas history professor at Texas Christian University.

RELIGION



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Amazingly graceless

American evangelicals rationalize the lapses of Protestantism's greatest leaders but are far less charitable about Muslims' foibles

BY ROB ASGHAR
SPECIAL TO THE STAR-TELEGRAM

Rob Asghar, a Pakistani-American writer and former Presbyterian elder, is based in Los Angeles.

The "clash of civilizations" may dissipate when the West's hawks recognize that their worst fears lie not in their imagination but in their memory.

Picture Europe under siege by anti-democratic zealots. Picture a militant religious leader calling for the destruction of Europe's Jewish communities. Picture a Talibanesque theocracy arising in a major European center.

Given that this is no dark fantasy but simply a recollection of Europe during a Protestant Refor-

mation that was reputedly a highlight of Western civilization, a war of civilizations seems merely a jingoistic myth.

Frustrated by President Bush's relative moderation and his willingness to call Islam a "religion of peace," right-wing American pundits, historians and religious leaders increasingly portray Islam as an irredeemably violent menace.

They cite the Arab street's anger at Danish cartoons and its hostility to Israeli policies as

More on RELIGION on 5E



'I wished to live deliberately'

■ If we listened to Henry David Thoreau, we might question our push forward, our need for more and more and more.

By TODD SOUTH
SPECIAL TO THE STAR-TELEGRAM

I feel most like an American while driving.

The movement mimics my country's attitude. Each year, things go faster. There's always something more important to do, somewhere more important to go.

Where we're going — why are we going there so fast? What are we missing along the way?

That's the image I think the rest of the world has of us. Always moving, but not going anywhere.

I'm not going to share patriotic writing that rallied the troops and citizens. The author who best tells the story of Americans wasn't too popular in his own time.

Henry David Thoreau was a bit of an outsider. He also didn't care much for any transportation besides his own two feet.

The America I love is the nation of outsiders, nonconformists and dreamers because America, at its core, is about possibility.

The work that illustrates this best is *Walden*. Thoreau stepped away from the bustling towns of 19th-century Massachusetts and found solitude in the woods.

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life," Thoreau tells readers, "and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."

In his cabin, he laid out thoughts that struck to the heart of what a person's life should be about. He questioned the status quo and challenged readers to examine what they considered commonplace.

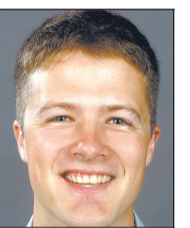
For generations, we have been put to sleep by promises of comfort and security. While leading the world in material development, we have neglected our character development.

Thoreau said, "The mass of men live lives of quiet desperation." Our nation is leading its own life of quiet desperation, and we don't even realize it.

Much of the world doesn't like America now. Like our country, I know what that feels like.

I served my country as a Marine Corps sergeant in 2003 in Iraq. I was my commanding officer's driver.

More on INTROSPECTION on 4E



Todd South, who served in Iraq as a Marine, is studying journalism at the University of Georgia.