

Opinions

The Blue Banner

Editorial

Art at the other end of the tunnel?

The death of rap artist Tupac Shakur will undoubtedly provoke heavy criticism on the rap music industry. The popular belief seems to be that rappers glorify a "thug" lifestyle of drug and alcohol abuse, murder, robbery, and exploitation of women. Although many—if not most—rap songs do present this type of lifestyle, the songs rarely—if ever—condone or glorify these actions.

What we seem to forget, or possibly ignore, is that art imitates life, not that life imitates art. Rappers, who are artists just as legitimately as other singers and songwriters, rap about the environment in which they have grown up and in which they live every day. They don't condone committing cold-blooded murder in their music, they rap about living a defensive life in fear of becoming a victim.

In Tupac's "It Ain't Easy," he said: "I can't sleep. Niggaz plottin' on me, kill me while I'm dreamin'. Wake up sweaty and screamin' 'cause I can hear them suckers schemin'. Probably paranoid. Problem is them punks be fantasizin'. A brother bite the bullet. Open fire and I doubt I wonder why."

Rap music also often expresses the problems and concerns of racism and of living at the lower end of the socio-economic ladder. Tupac's "Soulja's Story" confronts some of the difficulties of being black in today's society: "They're cuttin' off welfare. They think that crime is risin' now. You got whites killin' blacks, cops killin' blacks, blacks killin' blacks. S--t's just gonna get worse."

This hopeless feeling is also often reflected in rap music, and many people use this as yet another attack on rappers. Because many of us (both critics and fans of rap music) don't live the lifestyle that rap music portrays, we can't begin to understand the difficulties in escaping from this life.

We are quick to judge and seem to forget the harsh realities of living in a threatening environment. When people face each day in danger of being killed or hit by thugs, how can they possibly see the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel? How can they even see the tunnel?

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The Blue Banner welcomes submissions of letters and articles for publication. All submissions are subject to editing and are considered on the basis of interest, space, taste, and timeliness.

Letters must be typed, double-spaced, and must not exceed 300 words. Letters for publication must also contain the author's signature, classification, major or other relationship with UNCA.

The deadline for letters and classifieds is noon on Tuesday. If you have a submission, you can send it to:

The Blue Banner
208A Carmichael Hall
One University Heights
Asheville NC 28804

You're not in high school anymore, and here's proof

Nate Conroy
Columnist

Dear Freshmen,
Now that you've been away from the games of orientation for a while, what do you really think about this place?

I know at first life can be rough here at UNCA. So in case you haven't yet figured out all the differences between college and the high school you so recently graduated from, I've prepared this handy guide to assist you with what they don't mention in the brochure. Your friend, Nate

◇ In high school, if you don't have any friends you're all alone.

◇ In college, if you don't have any friends, you have your roommate.

◇ In high school, you have two categories of clothes: School clothes and casual clothes.

◇ In college, only two categories of clothes matter: Clean clothes and dirty clothes.

◇ In high school, you're cool if you don't do any work.

◇ In college, those people are gone next semester.

◇ In high school, lots of people are still growing and awkward-looking.

◇ In college, the people look almost old enough to play a high schooler on TV.

◇ In high school, your family pays about .0000000001% of the bill for your school in the form of paying taxes and buying candy bars in school fundraisers.

◇ In college, either your parents pay or you go into debt for the rest of your life from

taking out college loans.
◇ In high school, you're cool if you smoke and then hide it when the principal comes.

◇ At UNCA, cool people sit outside of Karpen and smoke.

◇ In high school, you have to put up with obnoxious PDAs (Public Displays of Affection) in the halls.

◇ In college, people go to their rooms and have sex.

◇ In high school, you have a few low-end computers that 95% of students and 99% of faculty don't understand.

◇ In college, you have a buttload of extremely expensive computers that lots of computer-types claim to understand, but no one really does.

◇ In high school, you have a yearbook every year.

◇ At UNCA, the only time we tried to have a yearbook, some guy took everyone's money for it and ran.

◇ In high school, people talk about drinking.

◇ In college, people become alcoholics.

◇ In high school, there are lots of good-looking girls around.

◇ In college, high school girls become jail-bait.

◇ In high school, you miss most of the good cartoons and talk shows because you're at school.

◇ In college, you can schedule your classes around Jerry Springer if you feel like it.

◇ In high school, mommy does your laundry for you.

◇ In college, you'll trek across the state with a hamper in tow so mommy can do your laun-

dry for you.
◇ In high school, the teachers are shocked if you cuss.

◇ In college, you're not shocked when the teachers cuss.

◇ In high school, computers are for dorks.

◇ In college, only dorks haven't learned how to use computers to download porn.

◇ In high school, you get assigned seats.

◇ In college, you can change seats if you want, but the unspoken rule is that you stay within a couple of desks of the seat you took the first day.

◇ In high school, sports are pretty important.

◇ At UNCA, most of the student body couldn't give a rat's ass (even when we win a championship).

◇ In high school, people wear cool college shirts.

◇ In college, freshmen wear their senior t-shirt for 3 weeks until they realize it makes them really, really look like a freshman.

◇ In high school, Student Government is an utterly useless popularity contest.

◇ At UNCA, SGA has the "power" to make suggestions to the administration.

◇ In high school, you say "her-ass-ment."

◇ In college, you say "harris-mint."

◇ In high school, you skip class to make yourself look like a rebel.

◇ In college, you skip class to sleep.

◇ In high school, going to the auditorium is cool because it means you're going to an assembly and getting out of class.

◇ At UNCA, you go to the auditorium for Humanities lectures.

◇ In high school, you can use logic to get by on multiple-choice tests.

◇ In college... can you bulls--t an essay?

◇ In high school, the school issues you books.

◇ In college, you have to take out a second mortgage to pay for your books.

◇ In high school, the cafeteria serves the same nasty refuse day in, day out.

◇ At UNCA, the caf has good variety of refuse.

◇ In high school, you have to listen to other people's loud music in the parking lot.

◇ In college, you have to listen to other people's loud music when you're trying to sleep.

◇ In high school, the first amendment says teachers aren't allowed to push religion on you.

◇ In college, the first amendment says Gary Birdsong can stand outside of the caf and preach his helllllll-fire.

◇ In high school, the only advantage teachers have over you is the teacher's manual.

◇ In college, some of the professors actually know what they're talking about!

◇ In high school, people do drugs because they're bored.

◇ In college, people do drugs because they're stressed.

◇ In high school, some administrators' sole reason for being is to catch you skipping.

◇ In college, no one gives a crap whether you come to class.

Humanity is humanity, stop pretending otherwise

Kristi Howard
Columnist

I debated for quite some time whether or not to write this column. What finally gave me the old "kick in the pants" to do so was an article that appeared in last week's Banner about Dr. Charlotte Goedsche and her partner, Cynthia Janes, who won an award for speaking out for gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, despite threats to their own personal safety.

The fact that these two women put themselves at risk rather than keep quiet about the need for gay rights in this country got me started thinking about bravery and strength of personal convictions. The fact that they should be threatened for expressing themselves made me wonder if America isn't going backward instead of forward.

Now, before you call me an alarmist—or an idiot—just think really hard. Think about the number of African American churches that have been burned lately in the South. Think about the fact that in this modern age we still have the KKK, we still have gross censorship and women who make less than men for doing the same job.

Think about the fact that in this country where individual freedom is supposed to be prized above all things, we still have an entire group of people who are treated with

violence and disgust just because of who they are and who they love.

We would like to think that we've come far since the days of the suffragists or Dr. Martin Luther King. In the relatively liberal atmosphere of Asheville its easy to think that the good guys are winning and that everything is OK. It is easy to forget that the world is still a place intolerant of difference.

It hasn't been too many years ago that a brave woman named Rosa Parks dared to say that there was no reason that she should have to walk to the back of the bus to sit, just because of the color of her skin. And people hated her for telling the truth. Her actions were so threatening to some people that they felt the need to react with violence.

It wasn't so very long ago that a group of women stood up and said, "We'd like to vote too, thank you very much. There is no reason why we shouldn't be able to." And people hated them for telling the truth. Their words and actions scared some people so badly that these women were threatened with violence.

And now we have another group of Americans standing up to say, "I'd like to love the person that I love without being the target of violence, thank you very much. There is no reason why I should have to apologize for being who I am." But some people don't seem to

be listening, because telling the truth seems to be getting these people into trouble.

True, we are an integrated society. But there is still racism. True, women have rights now, but there are still those who think that their rightful place is in the kitchen. True, the First Amendment gives gays and lesbians the right to say "I deserve the same rights as everyone else," but there are those out there who would like to kill them for it.

And, if that doesn't strike you as just a little bit scary, then it should.

Don't get me wrong. Everyone has the right to their own opinion. Right now you could be thinking, "Man, that chick is whacked out on Goofballs or something. She doesn't know what she's talking about." And no one should try to take that opinion from you. It's OK to disagree.

You have every right to think that I don't know what I'm talking about. But if I make you so angry with my mere words that you have to blow me up with a big old bomb, that is another story altogether.

What no American has the right to do is to hurt someone else with their ignorance. When someone's lifestyle so threatens you that you have to send them death threats, or take potshots at them outside of abortion clinics, then you need to take a long look at yourself, buddy, because you just stepped over the line.

My ultimate point is that hate hurts everyone. It hurt everyone

in the days of Dr. King, and it hurts everyone now. Not just those that it is directed against, but everyone who has to live in the hostile atmosphere created by intolerance. And trust me, that atmosphere is about as welcoming as the ammonia-tainted air of an uninhabitable planet. Living, loving things don't have a chance in that kind of world.

Just because you are not gay doesn't mean that discrimination against gays isn't your problem. Just because you aren't African-American doesn't mean racism isn't your problem. Just because you aren't a woman doesn't mean sexism doesn't affect you. When one person is discriminated against, that sends out a bad message, a message that some might interpret to say that it is OK to take other's rights away.

But we are all the same. Every human being has the same need for love, warmth, and compassion.

We all have to live on this planet together, people, so we might as well get used to that fact. We might as well try to get along. Despite what some people may think, it's a big world—plenty big enough for everybody.

It is up to each and every one of us to decide whether we are going to accept one another as-is, without trying to discriminate or silence or destroy, and move forward into the future—or cling to the hate and stay mired in the past.

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