

Opinions

The Banner

Editorial

Roses and thorns

Mullens try to make a difference

Two UNCA professors are trying to make a difference in the Asheville community. Dwight and Dolly Mullen of the political science department are part of a 100-member task force charged with improving the performance of students in the Asheville City Schools. The Mullens, both longtime civil rights activists, are seeking to remedy the plight of African-American students, whose numbers are suffering from staggering dropout and transfer rates and the few who make it to their senior year are proving to be ill-prepared for standardized college entrance examinations.

Unlike some members of the panel, the Mullens are not too shy to discuss the potential hard solutions to these hard problems. While the possibility of an Afrocentric school is controversial to most people and unconstitutional to some, the statistics that show the plight of African-American students in Asheville beg for a thorough investigation of a scheme that has worked in many of America's major cities to improve the performance of African-American students via culturally-sensitive education.

The Mullens should be commended for having the courage to face the turbulence that always meets any sort of race-based solution to one of society's problems—even though the problem in discussion may be affecting a particular race of people in a disproportionate way and a race-based solution is the obvious choice.

Asbestos removed sans warning

Some UNCA students were shocked to discover danger signs warning of asbestos removal in progress as they returned to their dormitories early from the winter break. While administration officials have assured us that the presence of asbestos in the floor tiles in some of the Governor's Village dorms poses no threat to the residents, the administration should have told the students about the presence of this known carcinogen before its removal. What would the harm be in telling the students before they find out purely by accident?

According to UNCA safety officer Tom Goddard, more asbestos-laden tiles may be found during the ongoing survey of campus buildings. We ask that the administration be a little more forthcoming on future discoveries of asbestos on our campus, particularly in the dorms.

Generation X awakes at last

After facing many years of contempt and ridicule at the hands of the once socially-conscious baby boomers, some of the more enlightened members of Generation X are trying to change the world right here at UNCA. Led by a diverse group of visionaries, GRASP UNCA is ruffling feathers and earning kudos from fellow students during their daily demonstrations in the Quad.

What makes GRASP UNCA so different from past attempts at campus activism? Whereas groups in the past have met with mild success at their campus rallies (a short-lived burst of enthusiasm for a worthy cause), GRASP UNCA is reaching for a long-term commitment to changing the campus community for the better as these groups are pooling their resources and joining forces to make a difference. Yes, there is strength in numbers.

Phone rate hike proves ominous

UNCA cannot afford to cover the costs of BellSouth's dial tone charge, a necessary commodity for most of the university's resident population, yet the school can afford to foist the unwanted \$94,000 voice mail system on the dorm residents. While UNCA Bookstore manager Mike Small, who oversees the university's phone and voice mail system, says that the voice mail service is free, it appears that the students will be paying the costs—just in another way.

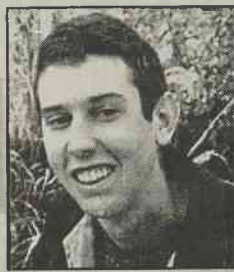
The administration justified the implementation of the voice mail system with a bogus survey that included the opinions of commuter students, who should have had no voice in a program that would more greatly affect the resident population. SGA Senator Alphonso Donaldson has proven just how much the residents want the voice mail system his own survey that included only those opinions relevant—his fellow dorm residents. Donaldson is a lone voice in the wilderness, but he has the backing of the silent majority on campus and the administration should listen to his concerns.

In remembrance of Dr. King...

Finally, this has been a week to remember the achievements and celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, perhaps the single greatest affector of social change that this country has ever seen. While we all look back on the contributions of Dr. King in our own ways, we can feel his spirit of active, peaceful protest for positive change all around us.

So, in remembrance of Dr. King, *The Banner* salutes those students and faculty who have chosen to raise their voices in peaceful dissent to those policies at UNCA and the Asheville community that they see as significantly impeding the progress of the people.

The logic of "pro-life feminism"



Jim Kirk

columnist

Twenty-five years ago, on Jan. 22, 1973, the United States Supreme Court passed a ruling that would radically change the American moral landscape. It would set the stage for a conflict that would divide the American people for decades to come.

That ruling was, of course, *Roe vs. Wade*, and the abortion battle has been, and still is, one of the most divisive moral issues our country has ever seen. The issue is as divisive today as it was 25 years ago. The tensions of the abortion conflict have grown so bad, the division so deep, that it seems forbidden even to talk about it. Abortion is the ultimate conversation killer.

For many, it has become only a political battle between two opposing groups. Others have stopped caring—they just know they're "pro-life" or "pro-choice." In some ways the issue seems to have transcended abortion. To be "pro-life," at least in our public consciousness, seems to entail much more than to believe that the fetus is a real person; likewise, to be "pro-choice" is to associate oneself with an alternate plethora of ideas and beliefs. Apart from the group identity of "pro-something," probably most people would be unable to defend their position.

If we are to end this divide in our country, honest discussion, not political discussion, must take place

between real people. But what is needed first is a resolution to the conflict within each of us—a real resolution to the moral dilemma of abortion. I believe such a resolution is possible and attainable within this generation. Not a forced resolution of law, but a real end to the moral confusion and struggle that the last 25 years have borne witness to, and the young people of our age have inherited.

We may find this resolution in the growing "Pro-Woman, Pro-Life" movement, headed by the organization Feminists for Life. Begun in 1972 by a woman forced out of the

Feminists for Life of America
National Office
733 15th Street NW, Suite 1100
Washington, D.C. 20005
202-737-FFLA
Or, at their web site:
www.serve.com/fem4life/

National Organization for Women because of her pro-life beliefs, Feminists for Life seeks to carry on the tradition of pro-life feminism.

Pro-life feminism? This may sound like an oxymoron to many, but, in fact, Feminists for Life finds its inspiration in a strand of feminism that is often ignored by the feminist

mainstream. Early feminists, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and many more, understood abortion to be morally wrong in-itself, but within the context of a society that made it possible and prevalent. They believed that abortion was a symptom of deeper social problems, and that it often only freed men from the responsibilities of fatherhood.

They called it "child-murder" (Susan B. Anthony), "degrading to women," and "infanticide" (Elizabeth Cady Stanton). Victoria Woodhull, the first female presidential candidate, said, "The rights of children as individuals begin while they remain the foetus." Elizabeth Cady Stanton connected the issue of abortion directly to women's struggle for freedom: "When we consider that women are treated as property, it is degrading to women that we should treat our children as property to be disposed of as we see fit."

These women recognized the humanity of the fetus in a time before ultrasound, before color in-the-womb snapshots, before our in-depth knowledge of fetal development. They recognized that whatever the baby looks like in the womb, which is remarkably like a baby outside the womb, that is simply what human beings look like at that age. They recognized that the fetus is a living organism. They affirmed that that living organism was a real person and to end its life was a violent act.

In 1911, Emma Goldman, the radical anarchist, made a sad observation: "The custom of procuring abortions has reached such appalling proportions in America as to be beyond belief... so great is the misery of the working classes that seventeen abortions are committed in

every one hundred pregnancies." How appalled would she be today, when in our country 25 to 30 percent of all pregnancies are ended by abortion?

Twenty-five years have passed since our country legalized abortion. In that time, we, as a country, have managed to split into two large factions. One side believes we are murdering our children at a rate of over 3,000 a day. The other side ignores those people, often by writing them off as extremists, and says women must have access to abortion for a variety of reasons.

I wish there was a compromise position. However, the sad fact of the matter is, either that growing organism in the womb of a woman is a baby, a real human being, or it is not. From a "Pro-Woman, Pro-Life" perspective, we can affirm both the sanctity of human life and the very real conflicts a woman with a crisis pregnancy faces in our culture: "This, obviously, will not please everyone, but it calls the pro-life movement to do more than protest and the pro-choice movement to see that there is something wrong. In our culture, abortion has become an accepted solution to crisis pregnancy. Once it is seen, not as a solution or a right, but as a painful symptom, those who call themselves "pro-life" and "pro-choice" may come together to help women in need.

Hopefully, one day soon we can dispense with the labels entirely and say with Martie Brinkerhoff, another early feminist: "When a man steals to satisfy hunger, we may safely conclude that there is something wrong in society—so when a woman destroys the life of her unborn child, it is an evidence that either by education or circumstances she has been greatly wronged."

When the government breaks the law



Julie Pearson

columnist

As an environmentalist and park activist, I have a choice when it comes to advocating for our parks and natural resources. I can jump up and down and yell at the top of my lungs that something is wrong here, or I can convey the facts to you and trust that your intuition and intellect will do the rest.

It all began in 1989. Park officials at the Blue Ridge Parkway decided it would be more feasible to have park headquarters at Hemphill Knob on the parkway itself, rather than the current location at the BB&T building in downtown Asheville. Innocent enough, right?

According to the 1970 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), any federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment must include the following: a detailed statement by the responsible official on the environmental impact of the action, any adverse environmental effects which would be unavoidable, a list of all possible alternatives to the proposed action, a comparison of short-term benefits versus long-term productivity, and any irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources

involved in the proposed action. Furthermore, NEPA requires that the involved federal agency must solicit comment from the general public or from potentially interested or affected public or private agencies before creating such a statement, known as an environmental assessment or an environmental

assessment statement. In August 1997, after much investigation, the Western North Carolina Alliance (WNCA) took the lead on the issue by filing a complaint with the Council on Envi-

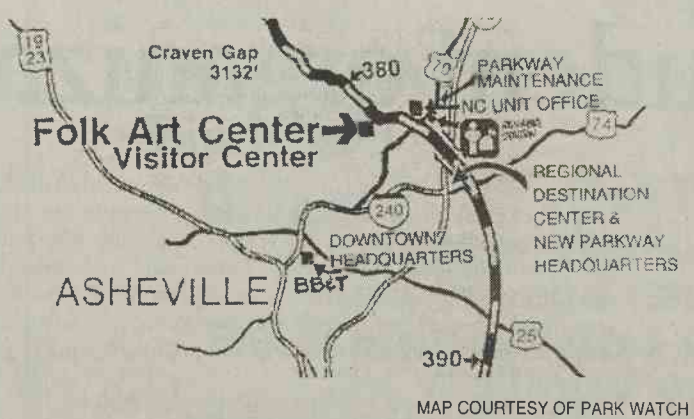
ronmental Quality. Here are the facts.

The environmental assessment, if you can call it that, was included in a 1989 report entitled, *Development Concept Plan*. It is about as thick as my pinky fingernail is long, and folks, I bite my nails (incidentally, a thorough environmental impact statement can be about 2-3 inches thick). Aside from one historian and one Federal Highway Administration engineer, the assessment was completed by a team of only parkway employees. No public comment was solicited. Construction on the headquarters began in 1997; eight years after the assessment was completed. More roads and grading have taken place than are included in the original

unjustified. Included in the parkway's plan is the idea of building, along with the headquarters, a Regional Destination Center. There is absolutely no environmental assessment of any kind on this proposed project, and yet construction continues. The superintendent himself commented in an interview that "the visitors' complex, to be called a Regional Destination Center, has been in the discussion stage since at least the 1970s." And yet, it was only briefly mentioned in the *Development Concept Plan*. Why is that? The parkway clearly sought supporters of the project, like Congressman Charles Taylor, Advantage West (an economic development/trade association), and state legislators; but the parkway failed to invite public comment by local individuals or agencies.

I think the real question here is about more than just protecting our resources. It's about protecting our laws and the reasons behind them. The issue is clear. NEPA has been violated. Opponents of the construction fear filing an injunction against the Park Service. For one thing, the contracting of the project is designed in a way which allows the contractor to be paid regardless of whether or not the Park Service requests a halting of all construction. This may send some taxpayers into a tirade. But are we really going to be silent and allow a federal agency to ignore the law?

For more information, contact Matt Dietz at WNCA at 258-8737.



MAP COURTESY OF PARK WATCH

plan or assessment. There is a failure to justify the cost effectiveness of relocating the headquarters, and the rejection of Alternative B (continuation of existing conditions) remains unexplained and