

# Opinions

The Banner

## Editorial

### Ill Communication

#### Stepping on toes

At UNCA, we have rallies for just about everything. We rally for racial unity, we rally for acceptance of different sexual orientations, beliefs, religions, and so on. There is no problem we can't rally together to try to remedy. Yet, in the fourth floor study lounge in Mills Hall, a student was harassed and no one was there to rally for him.

If you get nothing else out of any of the articles in this week's paper, you should at least be offended, if not completely disgusted, by the events that, according to the safety report, took place in Mills Hall on Oct. 10, when UNCA student Charles Schabel was harassed by four other students. Regardless of the differences in people's senses of humor, what is wrong with the picture that is presented here is one of infringing on a person's rights. Obviously, some of us just wanna have fun at the expense of others.

We like a good joke just as much as the next person, with emphasis put on the word "good." When it is obvious that someone else is becoming offended by a joke, though, it's time to take the stand-up routine elsewhere, especially when that routine involves defecating on another person's belongings. It's not only tasteless, but it's just plain stupid, and there is no place for it at UNCA, or any university, for that matter.

#### We got the power

Somebody pinch us, because we must be dreaming. Finally, somebody has acknowledged that there is a problem with the lack of emergency lighting in Governors Village.

Pete Williams, director of housing and residence life, insists that by January the problem will have been alleviated, but the plan for emergency lighting in Governors Village should have been set into action a long time ago. Instead, there is a "proposal in the works." Interesting that it took a letter from a UNCA parent to light the fire under the administration and get it working on a way to resolve the lack of lighting.

With two power outages already this semester, one coming during early morning hours, hesitation and promises just don't cut it this time. After all, the leaves are falling from the trees, and dipping temperatures are only precursors to the winter precipitation which has crippled our campus in the past.

What it comes down to is a simple matter of priority. With a recently announced \$500,000 allotment for the Justice Center, and deadlines for campus construction long since expired, the basic safety of resident students has been ignored.

It's insignificant that Fire Marshall Mike McCrain states that UNCA falls within building codes since the dorms "accommodate less than 100 people."

Students should be able to lie down each night knowing they won't wake up in the middle of an inferno with no warning or indication.

That the July 1997 draft of the Campus Master Plan acknowledges that "major renovations and repairs are needed," only goes to show that proper steps haven't been taken to update the Village. The Village residents have merely been talked about and placed to the side in our university's funding search for new backboards and athletic offices.

Judy Williams' letter may have been the inspiration to spring housing into action, but residents of the Village should sleep lightly in the next few weeks. Let's hope ambitious squirrels take an early Christmas break.

#### For those who still dream

We envision a system where the distribution of money will be fair and logical, the stronger help the weaker, and the leaders choose wisely and look into the future with clarity.

Instead, there's Highsmith: a dilapidated, run-down building that has protective tarps hanging from the ceiling instead of tapestries decorating the walls, that has been given a handful of coins to start the renovation process, instead of the full \$12 million it needs. Ironically, this start-up funding seems to be a formula for disaster at UNCA. Shall we find ourselves with another project that has funding to start, promises of money to finish, then fizzles out when the job is half-done?

Once again, UNCA finds itself scraping the bottom of the barrel for the leftovers in the state budget. Although there was a surplus this year in money to budget, thus the extended dispute of legislators on how to spend it, UNCA was still granted hush money until the next election year. Funny how the little guys always seem to finish last.

But there is hope. We might get the leftovers from the Blue Ridge Regional Destination Center. Then we would only be \$8.5 million short. Doesn't that sound promising? Well, UNCA, like a beggar at the door of the rich family that's not home, seems happy to get any of the crumbs that might fall from the big guys' plates, and the administrators have said they will work "diligently" to secure funding. But, until the world's a better place, until textbooks are valued more than bleachers, it's going to take faith, not works, to see the funding for Highsmith materialize.

## Rape issue still a horrible one



**Teresa Calloway**  
columnist

Rape is wrong. Really, really wrong.

Writing these words, I feel foolish. Everybody already knows what I have to say this week. It's nothing new. Rape is wrong. Duh.

But it is this tiredness of talking about rape that I want to discuss. If rape still happens, why are we weary of thinking about it, of reasserting the wrongness in our brains? Even I, a woman with a history of sexual abuse, am reluctant to write about rape. I have to get past that reluctance in order to question why the reluctance exists.

The first topic of discussion should be vocabulary. Perhaps our exhaustion of the issue stems from the fact that the word itself has, ironically, been raped. Of meaning, that is.

One of the reasons it sounds so stupid to say "rape is wrong" is that, in a very real sense, the word "rape" has no meaning independent of the word "wrong." This is a subtle point, but let's give it the old college try. When I write "rape," you read "wrong." The reason the first sentence of this column is so stupid is because we both, you and I, read "Rape is wrong" as "Wrong is wrong." The word itself has lost

potency, and so we have no powerful vocabulary with which to address rape in this country anymore.

Maybe we should make a new word. So, when a person holds another down, and by means of strength and/or violence forces or coerces him/her into sexual intercourse and/or intimacy against her/his will, we will refer to the act as, say, horrible. "Horrible" is the new word, which has a meaning totally separate from the word "wrong." Does everyone have that?

What about the phrase "date rape"? This one really gets to me. "Date" has too many positive associations to express any sense of violation. Given that "date" means two people getting together to socialize, with the possibility of knowing each other intimately, and "rape," as we know, means "wrong," we can roughly translate the phrase "date rape" to mean "bad date."

And can most of us really say we have less sympathy for a person relating a truly awful date? You see, in our language, we have revealed that we, as a society, don't care all that much about horrible or people who have been horrible.

When two people feel attracted to

one another and go somewhere to socialize with the possible intent of being intimate, and one of those people forces sexual intercourse on the other, let's call it "tragedy."

Does the issue have any more gravity now that it is attached to words you take seriously? How about the argument that people who dress in a manner which reveals their sexuality deserve to be raped? What about people who live in Florida? Adults living there have, I hope, made a conscious decision regarding their state of residence. Most even know that hurricanes frequent the state every once in a while. Despite this fact, when natural disaster strikes Florida, the U.S. government declares a national disaster area, and spends money to fix it back up. Why, then, are people who dress provocatively "deserving" of horrible and tragedy? Do the people in Florida deserve hurricanes? Did they tempt fate? Are those who live in Key West the equivalent of a woman walking through the streets of New York late at night wearing nothing but earrings? Are they less deserving of financial consideration? Are they less devastated?

Answer me! What I am trying to express is that we, as individuals and as a society, have no tools with which to fight this rampant violence. We have no terminology to relate the exquisite pain and violation, so we can't talk about it, much less insure that our judicial system will see that justice is done.

Looking at our society through eyes willing to see wrongness perpetuated on a national, local, and individual level is frustrating. You begin to get discouraged. You begin to understand that even though the Democrats and the Republicans are giving you a choice between, say, spending money on

education or spending money on military might, think of the choices they aren't even offering, and you will understand the extent to which you are socialized.

Why, for instance, are sexual violence and racial tension not the "issues" to which all politicians harken back to come campaigning season? I received a flier the day before elections from one Martin Nesbitt, who proclaimed loudly, "It's about education, health care, and jobs." I was infuriated with Martin! I still am! What does he mean telling me, a voter, what it's all about?

No, Martin, let me tell you what it's all about: it's about the vice principal at my high school, who had one year until retirement and didn't want to teach, so he walked around the halls issuing tardy slips and making verbose speeches over the intercom (no kidding, five, 10 minutes). It's about the local math teacher and preacher who "tutored" one of his attractive female students after school until her aunt caught him and put him in jail. It's about an old man coming into McDonald's where I was mopping and telling me I would make someone a lovely little wife one day soon. It's about the clerk calling me "sweetie" when I go to buy an alternator for my car.

It's about finding yourself falling into socially accepted roles that you oppose, and hating yourself for it.

So, when you need a break from thinking about "what it's about," as the ever-elocuent Martin Nesbitt phrases it, and you've thought about rape until it hurts, please, please, please, go to the Sadie Hawkins Dance this Friday in Highsmith, and, even though it's free, put in a dollar or so for the Rape Crisis Center, a.k.a. "Horrible Crisis Center." God knows, everyone deserves a break on Friday. Even Martin.

## Trust: do not believe the hype



**Liam Bryan**  
columnist

A funny thing happened to me last Thursday. I lost about an hour of my life in exchange for the laughter of a few hundred students. Yes, my loyal readers (all two of you), I was a subject of ridicule during my time under the blanket of hypnosis.

For those of you who decided to skip the amazing show, I shall tell you now that you missed a lot. I, being a spectator at one of his previous shows, thought, "Hmm, maybe I should give being hypnotized a shot!" Well, as those of you who were there know, I received the handle "Nick."

It was an interesting experience. I do not remember anything, except something about reclining on a beach. On the plus side, I got a lot of rest that night. The next day, however, people were shouting "Chicago!" at me just enough times to be annoying.

To get to the point, the very idea of hypnosis seems impossible. Shutting down the ego entirely and limiting the superego seem like science fiction to most, or even an outright hoax to a small minority. But how does one get hypnotized? To tell

the truth, my friends, it takes two things: a hypnotist, and trust.

That's right, ladies and gents, trust. A hard thing to find in this country at this time. Why are Americans so loath to trust anyone in this day and time? If you disagree on that point, take a look around the "American Underground." Want to learn how to build a bomb using household materials? Want to own an assault rifle with armor-piercing cyanide-tipped bullets? Want to join a militia for the purpose of bringing down a bloated government? We have got more conspiracy theories than we have citizens in this great big country of ours, and the public cannot get enough of those hare-brained ideas.

To paraphrase a movie with good special effects, "A person is a pretty smart guy. They can accept anything if you explain it to them in a logical way. Heck, my best friend's a person. But people are panicky, scared, and close-minded. If you introduce them to anything outside what they want to recognize as their world, they will condemn you and try to destroy what you showed

them." That is so amazingly accurate. How many conspiracies do you believe, reader? One, maybe two? A few more? Of course you do not, conspiracies are for little old ladies with blue hair.

But then again, do you believe the government is involved in one or more cover-ups? Do you believe in the existence of aliens on Earth? Or even UFOs? Who do you think killed Kennedy? Did man really land on the moon? Is Microsoft a monopoly? Are the oil companies repressing all forms of alternate energy? Or the new electric cars? Ha.

Why do you not trust what you are told? This is the greatest age of information in all of history. If you want the true story of an event, look for it. The Internet is right there, sitting beneath your fingertips. Yet, the majority of you are so lazy when it comes to information that you settle for tabloids, a "friend of a friend," or (shudder) "The X-Files." By Cheops's ankh, reader! Show a little initiative!

Yes, I know, there is a lot more behind the whole conspiracy-nut problem than laziness. It is a lack of trust, either in the government or the media. Face it, reader, you do not trust things at face value. All this "doublethink" is serving no more of a purpose than to make you paranoid. Sometimes a weather balloon is just a weather balloon.

Why does the American public cling to such outrageous fantasies? Is it just, at its core, some little person trying to make sense of the world? During a child's development, a young one will often try to make associations of events. It matters not that the two occurrences have no relation whatsoever (baby was born, then grandpa died),

it just matters that it seems to make sense of unexpected events. That is what Joe Blow does.

Why do people go missing? Well, they cannot have been kidnapped, because that is to horrible (besides, it only happens to other people). It must have been aliens! Yes! Taking our loved ones off to Shangri-La to be free of hard work a room in the fields with cute little bunnies! It is the same thing, over and over. When the public finds that the truth makes no sense, or when the truth is to blatantly hideous to face, the people find refuge in the fantastic. That football player did not kill his wife, it was a Mafia conspiracy. The Mayans were not more advanced than us, they must have had help from "visitors". Ted Koppel is not really a robot.

Why is it that trust in the truth is so difficult when trust in something off the wall is so easy?

Now, my dear readers, is the time for introspection. I challenge you, doubters! What is one particular line of thought that you have that some others have a hard time believing? Find out about this event, or attitude, or moral, whatever. Find out if you were right. Were you? If you were, you need to try another thought. I would not believe for a Planck second that there is a single person on this hunk of rock that has the correct low-down on every single event, philosophy, and driving law. Change one preconception of yours today, reader.

Trust, my friends. To expect an outcome or occurrence to be true. It is such a strange concept, and one of the few words in the English language that cannot truly be defined. Why, even Webster has no definition for the word. It is not in any dictionary anywhere. Trust me.