

# Perspectives

## Knowing what we can and cannot change



**Andrew Thommasson**  
columnist

This column is going to turn out to be a confessional of sorts. It is my hope and prayer that it will help someone not have to go through what I had to go through to come to these same conclusions.

I have never been one to give up control of anything easily. Don't get me wrong, I'm not the kind of guy who puts his girlfriend in a little box and forbids her to go anywhere without his consent or accompaniment. However, if both of us are not in control of what's going on in my life.

For this reason, it really used to drive me crazy when it snowed, because I couldn't go anywhere. The reason why I won't ride in a

car with anyone, that I have to drive, and it's also the reason I don't drink or do drugs. It's really quirky, and I realize this, but it's me.

Unfortunately, there are things, like the snow, that I can't do a damn thing about, and when I came to school in Asheville, I had to learn quickly how to deal with such things so I wouldn't stress myself out. For me, the answer started to come when I realized that I had a whole lot more control over my destiny than our largely fatalistic society tends to believe.

When I discovered that every thought I have breeds a like action, it made me monitor my thoughts much more closely. I can look at my past and, though I strongly dis-

like dwelling on it, find many examples of how my thought patterns realized themselves in my existence.

The best example, the best printable one, anyway, was my first semester at UNCA, when I had mononucleosis for three solid months. First of all, when I came to UNCA in the fall, I was terribly afraid of being away from home and being deathly ill. That fear manifested itself as a case of mono. After I got it, I was probably truly sick for about a month, and after that, I began to talk myself into still being ill. That continued mindset of "I'm sick, I'm sick" was what made it last so long, not the actual virus that beat the body down. And why wouldn't it? It was a great excuse in lots of different directions, but the problem was that at the time, I didn't understand how much I wanted the excuse, and subsequently the illness. You can't have one without the other, and mono became like a bad habit for me, until a friend of mine finally shook me up and told me what I was doing to myself.

When the blame finally comes to rest on the guilty party, instead of the worldly things he chooses to blame it on, it adds a great deal of perspective. Nothing "happens" to you that you do not allow to happen. Except, of course, for matters of collective consciousness—the things you cannot change, like hurricanes, floods, and even snowstorms. If the collective consciousness is negatively bent, then it will manifest negative things in that group's existence. The Y2K problem didn't become the international crisis it was hyped up to be because people stopped worrying about it as much.

I do not know any living human being that can single-handedly override the collective consciousness of a group of people with their own. If you know of such a person, I would like an introduction, but for the sake of conversation, I will assume that she/he does not exist.

While we cannot single-handedly override the collective consciousness of a large group, we can do things to help us put up with the snowstorms, whatever they

may be for you. One of the most important things to understand is that although there are some things that cannot be changed of your own accord, you do have infinite control over how you react to these things, and how you let them affect you. Humanity has a weird pattern of feeling threatened by the unconditional love of the great masters, killing them, and then, seeing how peacefully they accepted death, deifying them again.

The secret of the masters, though it is much more difficult than just knowing, is having the perspective that in the grand scheme of things, there is nothing that anyone can do to you to harm the eternal part within. They know the game goes on forever, and that the part within them that is God cannot be destroyed. That thought, though it seems simple, is the secret to a hakuna matata lifestyle. You could watch Mother Teresa among the lepers in Calcutta and see her reacting to the withered down with love. You could see Jesus on the cross saying "Father, forgive them." He reacted with love as well. Find out

what leniency you can take away from all your perceived problems, and, having found it, love the problem as a venue to greater understanding.

Also, we can help other people to understand what they are doing to themselves, and thus alter the collective consciousness. If you help another understand that they control their own destiny and own happiness by their thoughts and reactions to difficult situations, then you begin to assist in changing the way a group of people think, and the negativity won't build up. Then, who knows what kind of great things we will have in store?

So, God, grant me and others the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, and likewise realize that though there are not many things on that list, it still does exist. Grant everyone the courage to change the things they can change, and not to accept any less than their highest visions for themselves and the world. Finally, grant us all the wisdom to know the difference.

### Letters to the Editor

#### Bookstore woes

Dear Editor,  
UNCA and Asheville as a whole have been seen as progressive areas with their sworn allegiance to liberals and liberal thought. However, one area has failed to uphold these ideals: the UNCA bookstore. From the horrifying prices of books to the lack of software selection, the bookstore has only shown that they still thrive while students survive.

Recently, I purchased textbooks for three classes. The grand total was nearly \$400! I have two more classes to shop for. It might not have been such a kicker if I could have sold back a few books last semester. Unfortunately, I am stuck with a calculus book and an accounting book which are now officially "outdated."

To make matters worse, the bookstore also fails to see alternatives to saving students money in the software field. On their software rack: Windows 98, Office 2000, Visual C++ and all the expensive price tags to boot. What they fail to offer: Linux, StarOffice and Wordperfect 8 Personal Edition for Linux. These are cheap alternatives to costly licenses and troublesome software.

The bookstore fails to recognize that students can have a working workstation for less than \$100 when it comes down to actually packaged software. That means word processing, databasing, programming languages and environments, mail software, web browsers, spreadsheets and more for a fraction of the cost. The bookstore fails to offer cheap packages like those offered by Linuxmail where students can have a powerful operating system for \$5.00 and still download viable office software like Wordperfect 8

and StarOffice for Linux for free. Liberal, I believe not. Cost-effective, heck no. Corporate sellouts, could be. Basically, what I am trying to say is, "Stop gouging us. Offer us more, cheaper, better materials."

Casey Keller  
Junior  
Computer Science

#### Higher standards

Dear Editor,  
I have heard many people say that UNCA needs minority scholarships in order to improve diversity. UNCA does not need to spend any more time or money trying to increase diversity. Diversity is not UNCA's most important concern. The reason why UNCA has little diversity is because few minority

students apply. Compared to other universities in North Carolina, UNCA does not get that many applicants at all. We need to improve our academic standards and expand our curriculum. This will increase the number of students applying to UNCA, including minority students. This is the only way we can increase the number of qualified minority applicants.

Minority scholarships will not increase diversity. Racism can never increase diversity. Race-based scholarships will not attract qualified applicants. They are planning to go to the larger universities. Minority scholarships will just allow unqualified students to come here. Besides, how can giving students scholarships based entirely on race improve understanding between the races?

Joshua Johnson  
Freshman  
Undeclared

#### Skin deep

Dear Editor,  
It makes me awfully tired every time I hear or read the statement "being a person of color" elicited from what our current society classifies as a "minority." When, oh when, can we all get beyond the word construct, which is defeatist nature anyway?  
In my Humanities 414 class, under the instruction of Professor Whaley, we had what I feel was the intellectual exchange on the diversity issue at UNCA. I had said to the "minority" students, "Why is diversity only skin deep to you?" His response was that with color comes culture. I have come to realize

that this is false. What we all need to realize is that with geography comes culture, not mere pigmentation.

The monopoly the "minority" students have on the phrase "person of color" is over. We are all people of color—the approach here is inclusiveness instead of the age-old us versus them mentality. If the "minorities" on this campus were not so addicted to the joys of victimhood and finally refrained from perpetuating the aura of exclusiveness that surrounds them, then we could finally make some progress in achieving what seems to be this school's ultimate goal: diversification.

Jaimie Park  
Senior  
History

#### All welcome here

Dear Editor,  
Is not every citizen of this country entitled to his or her opinion, as well as guaranteed the right to express it under the first amendment? I believe that a "liberal arts" education should teach us to be openminded to all views of the world regardless of whether or not we are in accord with them.  
As students gather around Rev. Gary Birdsong merely to heckle him for his beliefs and views of the world and society, does this not completely destroy the idea of the "liberal arts" education and so-called openmindedness? What students need to realize is that Birdsong is

exercising his right to express his opinions, just as they have that very same right.

Instead of belittling insults, rude comments and the like, students should simply allow him to speak and move on with their classes and lives. After all, a crowd only fuels the fire.

I believe what worries me most is that as these crowds gather to refute his ideas and label him a "bigot," they are actually showing their own close-mindedness, as well as their refusal to accept his view of society.

Perhaps we should be careful to ensure that we are not so openminded that we are actually closedminded.

J. M. Hodges  
UNCA Alumnus

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