

Opinions

The Banner

Editorial

Into the dark

A closer look

When facing a potential date-rape case, a university's administration faces a tough decision — how to handle the case in a fair, yet sympathetic, manner.

Regardless of the official findings of the Student Conduct Board, there appears to be something lacking in the training of board members that would have made them more sensitive to the various aspects of a date-rape case and the needs of the alleged victim.

One of the reasons date-rape was not recognized as valid for so long was because people assumed that knowing the person beforehand made it consensual. However, this is not the case.

The fact that the alleged victim in this case came away from the board proceedings feeling that she had not been heard points to the need of the university to direct more attention toward rape education. She should have at least felt that the administration had taken her seriously.

Rape awareness programs have been started on campus, according to Vicki Harris of public safety. Maybe these programs should be directed at the faculty, staff and administration, as well as at the student body.

Starting somewhere

On April 19, thousands of people gathered in Oklahoma City at the opening ceremony of the memorial to the bombing that shattered the city and killed 168 people five years earlier.

Survivors of the blast, relatives of the victims and rescue workers came together at the Oklahoma City National Memorial on the former site of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building to remember a tragedy that President Clinton called the "worst act of terrorism in our country's history." In his speech at the ceremony, Clinton promised that "America will never forget."

America can't forget. We are reminded again and again that, even in this country in which we enjoy many rights and freedoms, we can breed evil and hatred.

After young Americans Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols were charged with the bombing, many people were shocked to realize we had to look inward, and not somewhere in the Middle East, for answers.

Since then, school shootings in Littleton, Colo. and other areas around the country have made it clearer and clearer that something in this great land of opportunities has gone terribly wrong. The dragging to death of an African-American man in Texas, the beating to death of a young gay man in Wyoming, and the shooting to death of one six-year-old child by another in a Michigan school remind us that, in many ways, America may be decaying from within.

We love to point fingers, to shift blame from ourselves to others or to abstract ideas of what has gone "wrong." If we can't blame outer international forces for things American-born-and-bred people do, we try to point to vague, conceptual ideas — lack of "family values," decaying morals or a decline in empathy and an increase in apathy.

Can we stop shifting the blame to things other than ourselves and take responsibility, as a nation and as individuals, for the confusion, anger and hatred that made the Oklahoma City tragedy a reality? Finger-pointing gets us nowhere.

We should take the five-year anniversary of the bombing to remember, contemplate, and, without unnecessary hatred or anger, do something to right our own wrongs.

What to do, what to do

The countdown has begun. The end of the 1999-2000 school year is drawing near. In this year, we have seen the unofficial change of the millennium, the massive flooding of most of Eastern North Carolina, the ridiculous inflation of gas prices and the continuing infiltration of the Internet into every aspect of our lives.

But none of that really matters to us right now. The only things that really exist in our little student worlds are the ever-looming exams. So, here are some things the *Banner* staff thinks would be much more fun by comparison.

Emma Jones: Chinese water torture
Sarah Wilkins: Chillin' with cannibals
Meghan Cummings: Commercial dish-washing
Krystel Lucas: Chased by wild hyenas
Jason Graham: Visiting North Carolina microbreweries
Rebecca Cook: She doesn't care — she's graduating
Lauren Deal: Visiting Appalachian
Matt Hunt and Zach Dill: Helping us with computer problems
Eric Porter: Putting inserts in the newspaper
Mark West: Memorizing the phone book

Ageism toward young adults



Liam Bryan
columnist

I despise prejudice, in all its forms. It is despicable to think that we, as humans, can form an opinion based entirely on ignorance or hate, based solely on a difference. Whether by gender, pigment, orientation, ancestry, belief, appearance or even age.

Ageism, my friends and readers. The youngest of prejudices, and probably the one we notice the least. No, really. Gender has been around the longest, then appearances and ancestry, and discrimination against sexual orientation has been around for more than a few hundred years. But age? Why is it suddenly appearing now, in the latter half of the twentieth century?

Around one hundred years ago, age did not matter as much. A person could graduate college, get a job, publish books, and generally do anything they were capable of, short of certain government positions. But today, we have mandatory prison sentences (read: twelve years of public schooling), imposed curfews and restrictions set by city governments, and the curtailing of natural human rights until a set age.

What is the deal? What happened within the last ten decades to change the way we view the rights of some-

one under twenty-one?

Well, about sixty years ago, a failed artist decided we needed to have a war. So he killed six million women, men, and children, and we did not even notice what Hitler did until after the war was over.

After World War II, soldiers came back from the war, settled down, and had families. Big families. And, thus, many children.

But where did those children go? School, of course. Mandatory education for all ages. And the structure? The only theory I can propose for the sudden restrictions placed on the education system comes from the sudden influx of military leaders just needing to impose needless structure.

So, education is now mandatory for all children up to age sixteen. And that begins the problem. It no longer becomes a question of how educated you are, but only how old you are. Age becomes the only thing that matters. Not intellect, not wealth, not locality, nothing nor matters except something that a person cannot control.

So what did that lead to? Well, it worked fine for a few decades. Children were cowed into obeying every word handed down by the "superior" people older than they are.

But then, we "children" became intelligent.

We are in the Information Age. Our new freedoms are not to land and home, but to the free exchange of information. We have learned to read, to formulate ideas and words. We children have become aware of our own fetters, and now we wish to cut them.

There is a problem, though. Children under eighteen are not citizens. How does a person who is not a citizen change a country? They start a war. That is what is happening now, in schools.

A six-year-old first-grader in Michigan. Two first-graders are suspended for plotting a classmate's death. Who is blamed for this? The parents. Why? Because this society does not believe that a person of a certain age is capable of conscious moral thought. And yet we expect these children to work morally within a group of over twenty people.

I say that the reason we are seeing all of this school violence among young people is because they have no rights. They have no freedoms. They are told what to do and what to think, and some of them are finally lashing out and saying that they will no longer be party to a system that will not listen to them.

Jonesboro, Lake Paducah, Littleton, all of these places are where these "children not capable of moral thought" stood up and said that our morals were the ones in question. The morals of those who would strip a person of their natural human rights. They question us in the only way that we would listen. They questioned us with violence. And we are still not listening.

A person capable of social interaction is a person capable of moral decisions. These children are fully capable of decisions that we deny them. What purpose does it serve to deny children basic rights of choice and free speech?

How can we fix this? It is not that hard. First of all, drop the requirement of attending school. That alone would fix more than any law or ruling on guns, busing, violence, and overcrowding. Many of these children do not want to be in school. Let the humans decide for themselves. Forcing a citizen to give up his or her rights for twelve years does not make good citizens. It makes resentful ones.

I could rant on for pages on how we strip the rights of citizens in public schools, but suffice it to say that a person loses freedoms of speech, religion, self-incrimination, expression, petition of government and self-protection. Considering that those are all rights guaranteed by the first ten amendments, these public schools are an institution that do not belong in the United States.

But, the second step to freeing our younger population from bondage is to drop the imposed age requirements. Instead of not allowing citizens under the age of eighteen in a drive, let them apply for a license whenever they are capable. Instead of restricting a person from drinking if they are under twenty-one, let all people drink as they see themselves fit. Let any citizen of any age register to vote.

We must learn to judge a person by their capabilities, not by how many times they have trekked around the sun. By collaring our young people, we are killing them.

Using squirrel transportation



Ben Ezell
columnist

I have recently found myself in a very sad state. Specifically, the state in which I stand on the side of the road, arm extended outward, thumb stuck straight up in the air.

During my time here at UNCA, I have had the privilege of having a vehicle available to me. However, I recently loaned this vehicle to my brother because his truck needed repair. He only needed it for one week.

As he was driving it back to its rightful owner, he wrecked. The damage done to my vehicle was too severe to repair. These events led up to my current dilemma of having to hitchhike from one place to another.

As I stand there, helpless, begging for any ride that would do, even a ride that involved packing my 6-foot-7-inch frame into the tiny space under the hatchback of an extremely undersized Honda. I know there has to be a better way.

I think long and hard about my predicament, obviously much more strenuously than I had ever thought about the actual consequences of letting my brother borrow my mode of transportation.

There must be some way to get some fast wheels on this campus. Maybe I could hitch to the local

costume shop, buy a phony police officer uniform complete with shiny, plastic badge and stuff a pillow under my shirt.

The Public Safety Department would surely give me an oversized SUV that I could cruise around campus in as many times as I like.

I dismiss other ideas because of my lack of the ability to rip off the exterior of the steering column, enabling me to hot-wire the car like the Terminator did.

I decide to forget about all of these unrealistic illusions and concentrate on resources readily available to me and within my control. I decide to corral approximately 1500 squirrels and use them as a means of transportation.

If you don't think these furry rodents are readily available in sufficient numbers to transport me 110 pounds, then you obviously have not visited the wooded area between Governor's Village and Justice Gym.

How, I ask myself, am I going to get these squirrels to follow along with my plan? I have several advantages over the squirrels that will force them to cooperate.

Some of these advantages involve a bit of manual labor in order to reap the full rewards, so I will need

every able bodied person in Bunkles County to help. I will seize control of their food supply by chopping down every tree within the radius of the squirrels' habitat, then meticulously remove the nuts and acorns from the limbs and stash them in my room.

Being overcast with starvation, I will have no choice but to go where I lead them. When I want to round them up in one area I can simply lure them there with a ration of their precious acorns.

By removing the trees, I have also gained another advantage over them by taking away their protection from the low flying hawk that I am convinced has squirrel for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

For temporary shelter reasons, I will drive the big, blue dump truck currently parked up the hill from the new parking deck and transport a load of mulch from the many mulch piles on campus.

After depositing the mulch in a convenient location for the squirrels, they will have to learn to burrow in the mulch as a means of protection. It might be tough for the little varmints at first, but it beats being eaten alive by the hawk.

The squirrels on this campus have also become almost inebriate, and unfeared of humans. Many times I have walked within a foot of one of these critters and it failed to even turn a beady eye in my direction.

This acts as an advantage, because as long as I'm going to use them as my personal chauffeurs anyway, they might as well be comfortable and trusting in their own paranoid manner.

I will go down to the physical plant and get them to cut out a large, square piece of wood, large enough for me to lay down on if

Then I take some of the irresistible acorns out of my room and spread them evenly over a smooth surface in roughly the same dimensions as the piece of wood.

Using an extremely complicated and complex system of levers and pulleys, I will suspend the slab of wood approximately one-foot above the acorns.

Once the squirrels get a whiff of their recently vanished source of food they will flock to it in waves, oblivious and uncaring of the wood dangling precariously above their heads.

Now here comes the tricky part of the plan. Once they position themselves underneath, I will drop the wood directly onto their backs. Then I will lunge out of the bushes and dive directly onto the board.

Some people might say that this will crush the squirrels into the ground, but, actually, the force of my impact will disperse evenly along the backs of all the squirrels, enabling them to carry my weight. (Do not consult any UNCA physicists about the validity of my presumptions.)

This will work in much the same way as some idiot once said that four 12-ounce aluminum cans might support the weight of a mid-sized sedan.

Upon impact, they will hopefully all move in the same direction, like a school of fish.

Given, I have no control over the direction, speed or overall will of the squirrels, but hopefully they will direct me to my nearest class. This method may resemble a surfer riding a wave for the first time.

Others may come up with better ideas than this if in the same situation as myself. However, given the rising gasoline prices, none could be more fuel-efficient.