

# OPINION

## Gifts that keep on giving

It is that time of year – again. Before the Thanksgiving turkey can even be digested, people everywhere flee the warmth and safety of their homes at 3 or 4 a.m. to sit in traffic more clogged than Dom DeLoise's arteries, wrestle frumpy, middle-aged women for that last stuffed animal or pair of socks on sale and wait in line to check out for over an hour. Every year it is the same old story, and this year was no different.

Why? Why do people do this to themselves? To save a buck or two on cheap, corporate goods so heavily marketed to consumers it makes TV during the holiday season feel more like a month at Jim Jones' camp?

This year, rather than running off to the big sales at the mall and 'smiling' chain discount stores, buy your gifts from places that will continue to give throughout the year. Try visiting your friendly local shop owners downtown. Not only will you find unique items to give to your friends and loved ones, you will be contributing to the local economy and well being of our little mountain town.

As an additional bonus to shopping downtown, Dec. 5 and 6 more than 100 downtown businesses are participating in the Shop for Change benefit. The Shop for Change benefit raises money for Interlace, a program that provides transitional housing and supportive services for abused women and children.

Look for shops with lavender balloons outside. When you buy items at these stores, you can rest assured that proceeds from your purchase are going to a worthy cause during the season of giving.

Other ways of giving gifts this year that keep on giving is to visit such stores as the Salvation Army Thrift Store, Ten Thousand Villages, The Goodwill and The Samaritan Shop. Proceeds from these stores go to benefit the poor and hungry both at home and abroad.

Too often in this world we live in, crass commercialism get in the way of what the season is really all about – being thankful for what we have and giving to those less fortunate than us. So the next time you are out shopping, set a little aside to buy a few extra canned goods to give to the hungry, or an extra toy to give to a child who will otherwise go without. Take your spare change and give it to the bell ringers.

Take a moment this holiday season to think of others rather than yourself, and give a gift that keeps on giving. You'll find these gifts are often the ones most worth giving.

## The Blue Banner's Quote of the Week

"Everywhere I go I'm asked if I think the university stifles writers. My opinion is that they don't stifle enough of them."

~ Flannery O'Connor

### The Blue Banner Fall 2003 Staff

<b>Dearborn McCorkle</b> <i>Editor in Chief</i>	
Jason McGill <i>News Editor</i>	Beth Wyche <i>Features Editor</i>
Adam Brooks <i>Sports Editor</i>	Terrence Basso <i>Campus Editor</i>
Stuart Gaines <i>Mountain Jam Editor</i>	Max Taintor <i>Photo Editor</i>
Whitney Setser <i>Managing Editor</i>	Shelby Thompson <i>Copy Editor</i>
Alan Ambrose <i>Online Editor</i>	Vincent DiNapoli <i>Circulation Manager</i>
Sara Miller <i>Advertising Manager</i>	Ed Fickle <i>Technical Support</i>

Mark West *Faculty Advisor*

To reach *The Blue Banner* staff, call 251-6586 or e-mail banner@unca.edu

Nothing in the Opinion section necessarily reflects the opinions of the entire *Blue Banner* staff, advisor or the university faculty, administration or staff. Unsigned editorials reflect the opinion of a majority of *The Blue Banner* editorial board.

Letters to the editor are subject to editing for AP style, length and obscene content.

Submissions are due to Karpen 244 or <banner@unca.edu> by the Monday before the publish day at 5 p.m.

Letters should include the author's name, class, major or other university affiliation.

*The Blue Banner* welcomes letters from all of the campus community and from all viewpoints.

## Protesters attempt to engage in political realm

Daniel Judson  
*Columnist*



Officials from 34 nations met in Miami during the week of Nov. 20 to negotiate the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas trade deal.

In the streets of Miami, 8,000 to 10,000 union workers marched and more than 1,000 other protesters descended on police barricades that blocked downtown streets to provide security for the trade meetings.

Associated Press stories on Nov. 20 reported violent clashes between police and demonstrators. Arrests, injuries and hospitalizations are not unusual incidents at protests, and they were common at this one.

The use of force against nonviolent demonstrations is patently inappropriate. However, it seems to be generally ignored in media coverage, and no one even questions the presence of police in riot gear at a protest march.

American citizens have the right to assemble for a demonstration, although it seems strange that this would even be necessary in a country where our elected officials are paid to represent the people.

Most people gain understanding of what our political leaders are actually doing through the media. The founding fathers intended for the press to serve and keep the voting citizens informed of the de-

isions made by politicians on their behalf, and thereby, keep politics honest.

If this is so, why are meetings like those of the WTO and the FTAA so mysterious? Why must these meetings be cordoned off and guarded by riot teams?

Why does the media give such large amounts of coverage to protests and demonstrations in proportion to the real news, which in terms of impact on the public, would be what is going on behind closed doors, where international capitalists make decisions that will effect the lives of workers at home and abroad?

The thousands of union members who demonstrated in Miami are concerned for their livelihoods and seem to have no other recourse than this muffled cry for help.

The trade ministers are not especially interested in the concerns of the union protestors, and due to the way demonstrators are represented to the general public, there will be very few who will join them to stand up for workers' interests.

The lack of wide spread solidarity is partly due to the fact that most protest coverage focuses exclusively on freaks, fringe groups and incidents of violence that creates an image of demonstrators as rabble rousers, violent dissenters and peripheral malcontents while ignoring the majority of protestors who are sincerely concerned citizens.

Despite the desired public im-

pression of demonstrations that is encouraged by the mass media, those involved are simply attempting to participate in the political life of our country, which most people seem to be practically cut out of.

More citizens ought to be concerned with decisions being made at meetings for the WTO and FTAA because it will directly affect the workers of our nation and the nations around us.

When do we the people get to vote for or against international agriculture subsidies or the future of jobs in our country?

Our government is supposed to be for the people, our elected officials are supposed to be our voices in the government representing our interests. But whose interests are they representing?

It doesn't seem to be those of the majority of the population who work for a living? Are the interests of the people best served by serving the interests of multinational conglomerate corporations who provide jobs to the workers?

When do the workers really get to give their opinion? It is obvious that many people feel that they are not afforded this opportunity in our representative democracy, and so they resort to marching in the street, which seems to be of little influence in matters regarding the rights of workers.

Nonviolent protests and demonstrations were successful in the civil rights movement and gained suffrage for many who were previously

disenfranchised.

However, it seems in recent days that the right to vote is a token gesture offered to give the public some feeling of self-determination.

In a direct democracy voting could accomplish something. As it is now the average voter is only entrusted with the simplest of decisions in local elections.

Beyond that, we are allowed to choose the lesser of two evils and hope that whoever is elected will choose wisely as our proxy.

Dr. Martin Luther King recognized that the true struggle was not defined by race but by economics. In the final years of his life, King fought for the rights of the workers and was a leader of the Integrated Poor People's Campaign.

The night before he was killed, King spoke at a sanitation workers strike in Memphis where he called for solidarity.

The greatest factor in the oppression of the workers is our collective inaction and apathy. Most people sit at home after work are content with whatever level of consumer comfort we can buy with our wages, and when we see demonstrators on television, most respond with either contempt or fear.

Workers and non-elites are being forced into the streets to demonstrate in an attempt to be active in the political life of our nation.

These tactics seem to be the best, but what else is a poor boy to do?

## Save some trees - stop whining

Jonathon Czarny  
*Columnist*



After reading Max Taintor's column in the last issue I couldn't resist the urge to respond.

Seeing how I am a mass communication major, I am always looking for a reason to spend more time in front of my computer screen.

Max, you really need to quit your whining. You said the "activists" tell you to stop complaining and do something because it is a way for them to tell others that their opinions don't matter.

Actually, it is a polite way of telling you to quit your bitching. When you complain about something and aren't willing to do anything about it, it is like telling a mechanic there is something wrong with your car and then saying "screw you" when he tells you how to fix it.

Your self-proclaimed apathy may not be laziness, and, of course, you have the right to say what you please and complain all you want.

It doesn't make you misunder-

stood. All it does is make you look like a jerk, especially when you write articles saying how much you don't care when it is obvious that you do.

"Activists" telling you to stop complaining doesn't bother you because it is some sort of infringement on your First Amendment rights.

It bothers you because it is a slap in your smug face. It shows you the truth, and that you are more like everyone else by "not caring" than you are by helping out.

The "I'm too cool to care" attitude isn't remotely admirable or new. Could it be that you want these people to "shut the hell up" and "get over it" because you are content with your distracted life?

Nobody wants anyone to shatter his or her safe little fantasy world. After all, reality is the ultimate buzz kill. You probably would have taken the "blue pill."

The phrase bothers you for the same reason it bothers me. We are too weak to want to snap out of our fantasy world, and we are jealous of

the people who have the strength and courage to do something better with their existence.

I'm sure you are smiling now while reading this. After all, your article was just an attempt at self-gratification. Any response would validate this cry for help. And yes, I fell for it.

But don't get the wrong idea about me. I am not an activist. I don't really care enough about our species to try and save it.

The earth will survive long after our species is gone. But I certainly won't mock the people who do care, even the assholes who only do it so they can look down on people like you and me.

Just have the courage to be you: a whiny, selfish, cynical person — a product of our "post-modern," "best country in the world" society. Don't try to mask this under some fabricated, misunderstood, middle-of-the-road-person.

Accept the fact that we will not leave a mark on this world. Do not lash out simply because you are an unremarkable person.

You are less like the band that is

still playing while the ship is going down, and more like someone who would dance to the music. In college you are not expected to form one-sided opinions about everything.

You are expected to learn to think for yourself, to be able to analyze the world and decide what is important.

You have obviously decided that you are most important, even at the cost of other people. If you care more about your comfort level than anything else, that's fine.

You are among many in this regard, those who would rather masturbate than activate.

Your comforting words at the end of your column sum it up better than I can: "You don't have to feel guilty because I don't." Thanks for your permission to ignore any conscience my pampered American ass might have left.

I think you do care. Why else would you write the column? I think you just want other people to dance with you while the ship goes down. Next time save some trees and write "Me, me, me? Why, why, why?"



Please Recycle  
The Blue Banner!  
Thank you!

Now accepting  
applications for  
circulation manager.