

# Make eye contact and make a difference with Campus Y

By Shilpi Somaya  
Contributor

Don't make eye contact. This was the oft-repeated advice I heard before going to New York City this summer. Whatever you do, just don't make eye contact with all those undesirable people. Those people that line the streets and ride the subway all night. The ones that smell like sewage and look at you with outstretched hands in hopes of a few loose coins.

After a few weeks in New York I'd gotten pretty good at not making eye contact. I could simply ignore all those undesirables; I would walk by them without even glancing their way or changing my expression.

Then one morning I opened the

New York Times to learn that Mitch Snyder had hanged himself the night before in Washington. The man who had dedicated his life persistently and selflessly fighting for the homeless had decided to give up the fight. At Snyder's memorial service, his friends recalled his words of advice to others regarding the homeless: "The next time you walk down the street and see a homeless person—look him in the eye,

ask him how he's doing, get him something hot to eat or to drink...anything, just acknowledge that he's alive and that you care..."

It was easy for me to sense the power of these words; by looking in the eyes of just one of the many homeless people I saw everyday in

New York, I could feel their pain and despair. I became abruptly aware of the racism, poverty, inequity, and danger that factored into the lives of every single one of these people.

Mitch Snyder knew how easy it was for the rest of us to simply not make eye contact; but he also resisted the temptation to just walk by the homeless and ignore them. He did something much harder—he took up their cause. And he did something much harder still—he took up their cause and fought relentlessly for it until the day he died.

For many of you, coming to Carolina as a freshman may be somewhat like my first experiences in New York. You may be excited, overwhelmed, scared, and more than a little apprehensive about some of the things you've been told. You will see problems here; problems specific to this campus, and problems reflecting those throughout the state, the South, the country, and the world.

For 131 years, the Campus Y has been the place on campus where students go to confront the problems they see. The specific problems have

changed over the years: Civil Rights demonstrations in the 1960's; a boycott of classes to protest the Vietnam War in the 1970's; and the first national student environmental conference last year.

Today the Campus Y offers a variety of opportunities: being a Big Buddy to a child in the community, teaching a university employee to read, planning Race Relations Week, organizing a discussion of global issues, volunteering at a soup kitchen,

see "Eye contact" p. 13

## BSM President gives welcome to Freshmen

By Sabrina D. Evans  
Contributor

On behalf of the Black Student Movement (BSM) I welcome you to the University of North Carolina.

The BSM was founded in 1969 to serve as a political, academic, and cultural vehicle for African-American students. Twenty years later, the 1990's hold a grim future—threatened civil rights legislation, increasing racial tension, and a crippling economic crisis in the African-American community. But

the 1990's also hold an opportunity to seize the potential in our community and a chance to empower ourselves. Your success at Carolina is a part of that potential and empowerment. Now more than ever the BSM is needed to assist African-American students in that struggle for success.

However, an organization is only as strong as its constituents. The BSM needs your support, input, criticism, praise, and commitment to effectively serve you. Please consider the BSM as an essential resource at the University of North Carolina.

Be on the lookout for the first BSM general body meeting in the next few weeks. Feel free to stop by the BSM office in Suite A, room 215 in the Carolina Student Union. Again welcome.

Sabrina D. Evans will be President of the Black Student Movement for the 1990-1991 academic year.

## Get Involved!! Make the most of your stay at the university...

By Grant R. Vinik  
Contributor

Aldous Huxley once said something that's been floating around in my head the last two or three months. He said, "Experience is not what happens to a man. It's what a man does with what happens to him."

What Huxley is suggesting is that it is not the experience that makes the person, it is the person that makes the experience. In our context, every May over 3,000 seniors graduate from the university. The diplomas all look alike and the degrees are all similar. What distinguishes one student from the next is what in fact he or she did while going through the motions of getting the same piece of paper.

For those who haven't seen, the opportunities this university offers are no less than extraordinary. To come through this university and not take advantage of some of what it offers is like buying a fancy sports car and then driving it like your grandmother drives her 1978 Reliant K. Freshmen, for those of you who don't know it, you've come to a fancy university. This school is consistently ranked one of the top five public universities in the country. You paid for it. Why not do something with it the way Huxley suggests?

One of the most obvious ways to do something with your undergraduate experience is to take an interest in one or several student organizations. I don't believe there is any

one out there who can not be interested in anyone of them; there are 285 different university recognized student organizations. If you have any interests whatsoever, I know there is at least one family of friends out there—people who just like you in some weird kind or way— who are waiting to entertain you, to intrigue you, and to hear what you have to say.

I found a family in UNC student government. We interact with the university faculty, staff, and administration representing the student interest in issues as diverse as minority recruitment and retention, increased faculty pay, securing a permanent site for the Black Cultural Center, pushing for an academic minor in each department, and lobbying the state legislature for lowest possible tuition and fees.

Representing student interests as well as staying in touch with student interests is a difficult task. We need your help—freshman through seniors. Underclassmen (freshmen and sophomores) particularly sell themselves short. You can get involved and make changes in your first year. Every year a number of freshman and sophomores do exactly that. Taking the first step is easy: walk into the Office of Student Government (Suite C of the Student Union) and ask someone how to get involved. If no one is around leave a message for me and I'll call you back.

Grant Vinik is the Student Body Vice-President for the 1990-1991 academic year.



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