

the Seahawk

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Editorial Viewpoint...

"Hurricane" Carter: A lesson in justice

The audience that filled Kenan Auditorium for Rubin "Hurricane" Carter's lecture came despite the fact that the lecture was poorly publicized. In fact, the lecture was completely sold out. This is a sign that students and community members are more aware and interested in university events than many give them credit for, and that they realize that issues like capital punishment require thought and deliberation.

Carter was charged with killing three white people on the flimsiest of evidence. Initially Carter and John Artis, who was also charged, were released. Police even went as far as to say that they were never suspected. Alfred P. Bello, a local criminal and suspect in the murders gave the police a signed statement that said he had seen them at the murder scene. On this evidence, and another statement from a dubious source, Carter and Artis were convicted.

The prosecutor wanted to give the two the death penalty, but the court sentenced them to three life sentences.

Imagine being in prison for 20 years, completely innocent. Then imagine how many people have been wrongfully imprisoned, living and dying with the knowledge that someone else should have been there. How much worse is it when the so-called criminal was imprisoned not just for being in the wrong

place at the wrong time, but just for being the wrong color? A white person would probably not have been convicted for the same crime, with the same evidence, as Carter and Artis.

Although the events happened in the late 60's and Carter was freed 17 years ago, these issues are still important and vital. They illustrate the difficulties inherent in our justice system and offer an object lesson of the dangers of unreservedly supporting the death penalty. It's very easy to say that criminals are unable to reform, and that if someone is convicted, there was no reasonable doubt in the case, but often that just isn't true. Carter's story is the perfect example of that.

Students and faculty members at the lecture came even though there was little real publicity about the event. A few posters in the University Union, a notice in the ACE calendar, but not much else. It says something about Carter's importance as a significant figure in recent history that so many people showed up. It was also a sign that students are more concerned about current issues than many people believe and that Activities and Leadership office's events, even those that are not well publicized, can attract an audience when they offer something students find interesting and relevant.

Letter To The Editor

Dear Editor:

I am taking Media Ethics with Mr. Church. My letter is in regard to the tuition hike that is being discussed at the university. It is understandable to raise the cost of tuition in order to offer competitive salaries and benefits to attract and retain faculty. In my opinion, the reputation of a university is built upon the knowledge and respect of its faculty.

However, I disagree with holding the state responsible for further financial support. I understand that this is a state-supported school, but somehow the university must figure out ways to support itself. There must be a shared vision among the university and students, in which both work together to raise money. SGA President Patrick Gunn stated he is disappointed because education isn't high on the state agenda. (The Seahawk, January 12, 2000). Education is important to our state government. The problem is that every time there is a financial trouble, everyone looks to the state for help. The state supports fifteen other UNC schools. There is only so much help the state can

provide.

This is a growing university along with growing financial conflict. If we are to grow as a university we must expect these kinds of problems. This is a problem within the university that should be solved within the university.

Jon Heafner

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Seahawk encourages all readers to submit letters to the editor for possible publication. Please limit all correspondence to 300 words. The Seahawk may edit letters for space. The Seahawk reserves the right to refuse publication of any letter. Libelous, false, and misleading material will not be considered for publication. All letters must be signed by the author. Letters to the editor are the individual opinions of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Seahawk staff or the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. Letters can be submitted in person at the Seahawk office, University Union room 205E; by mail at The Seahawk Newspaper, 601 S. College Rd. Wilmington, NC 28403; or by email at shkeditor@hotmail.com.