

BOARD EDITORIALS

LET'S GET IT STARTED

Students still have time to get involved in this fall's municipal elections and add their unique views to towns that could use the variety of ideas.

Last Thursday's candidates forum, held by The Daily Tar Heel for hopefuls in this fall's municipal elections, could have been a fine way for students to learn about the issues and the candidates.

Too bad only a few dozen people showed up. Sure, it was raining, and yes, organizers didn't offer any free pizza. But those are poor excuses for students' apathy toward local politics.

Until students get in the game, they're never going to have as much clout as the town residents who, despite being as busy as those on campus, work hard for Chapel Hill and Carrboro. And that's the way it ought to be. Though local politicians do a fine job of responding to student concerns, a lot of their time is taken up by things such as neighborhood concerns — which, while important, are often tangentially related to campus.

To be honest, it was downright embarrassing to have candidates come out in the rain to talk to students — only to find that there were very few students for them to talk to.

Discussion, furthermore, centered on issues that are important to students: Affordable housing,

Carolina North, transportation, the environment and social justice all came up during the two hours in which the local candidates kindly graced us with their presence. It's clear that students care about at least some of these issues — the number of people on campus involved with groups such as Habitat for Humanity, the Black Student Moment and the Student Environmental Action Coalition proves it.

The self-marginalizing actually hurts Chapel Hill and Carrboro as well. Students represent a wide range of political and social beliefs — perhaps a wider range than in local politics, where being a Republican is a serious handicap to winning office. Progressivism is a proud local tradition, but it would only be made better by students — even those who don't always agree with town leaders.

It's not too late to learn about the candidates in this fall's elections. The DTH has an elections link off its main Web site, and the Chapel Hill Herald is running a series of discussions with everyone involved.

Starting Oct. 24, when the Morehead Planetarium & Science Center will open for early voting, students should put what they learn to good use.

THE GREATER GOOD

Faculty are right to be wary of the Pope Foundation, but the money the philanthropic group could provide would greatly benefit the University.

It's quite understandable that faculty members at UNC feared last year's discussion between the University and the Pope Foundation, a Raleigh-based philanthropic group, that would have led to the creation of a curriculum in Western studies.

After all, the group — ostensibly nonpartisan — provided seed money that helped start the Pope Center for Higher Education Policy, a decidedly partisan, conservative group that often attacks what it sees as UNC's place in liberal academia.

But UNC still would have been better off with the millions of dollars the Pops offered to start the Western studies curriculum. Now that the talks have started again, the Pope Foundation should give UNC another chance to spend its money.

A revised proposal calls for the University to get about \$3.9 million in order to expand programs that already deal with Western culture, such as first-year seminars and study abroad programs. Unlike last year's plan, it does not call for the formation of a separate curriculum.

Some will scrutinize the plan — and they should. But at first glance, it appears to be an offer that will keep intact the University's integrity while appealing

to the Pope Foundation's desire for more study of Western culture on campus.

That's because this year's plan calls for almost \$1 million less in funding and allows the Pope Foundation even less of a role in determining what will be taught. If the University has sole discretion in the expansion of Western studies, that should alleviate most concerns about UNC's sovereignty in the matter.

Certainly, administrators could face pressure when it comes to expanding these programs. The Pops are powerful folks.

But at some point, it's worth biting the bullet to realize a crucial truth: In all but the most extreme cases, North Carolina's educators ought to accept any money that will help them teach tomorrow's future leaders. As long as UNC gets to determine what it teaches and doesn't let itself get bogged down by partisan politics, it has an obligation to fulfill that mission — even if it comes with its fair share of controversy.

UNC has provided itself with a good opportunity that, when put into place, doesn't seem likely to have any strings attached. Now, it's the Pope Foundation's job to take the bait.

A CHASE FOR SPACE

Changes to some of Chapel Hill's parking fines are welcome moves that will foster civic responsibility and give the town an added revenue source.

Drivers who park illegally should beware, because Chapel Hill is tightening its grip on parking-spot predators.

And not without due reason. Monday night, the Town Council took the step of increasing four fines for illegal parking. The biggest increase is a \$100 hike in the amount people must pay if they park illegally in a handicapped space; drivers will need to fork over \$200 if they do so.

In addition, those who park at expired meters can be fined every two hours instead of just once. The fee for parking on sidewalks and bus lanes will go from \$40 to \$50. Cars that are "booted" also will face a higher ransom of \$55 — as opposed to the old \$30 price tag — to become free once again.

The changes — most of which are meant to make the town's laws more in step with the University's — work for three reasons.

First, efforts to make parking ordinances in the town and campus more regular are positive moves. It doesn't make much sense that someone parked in a handicapped spot along Raleigh Street can get slapped for \$250 while a driver who did the same thing on Franklin Street used to face a ticket for

only \$100. It's the sort of discrepancy that confuses residents and angers visitors.

More importantly, however, the increased fines should serve as a deterrent for people who want to park illegally.

Granted, not all the hikes will have the end effect of hurting people who callously park in places such as handicapped spots. Jacking up costs for people whose meters happen to run out, for example, likely won't serve that purpose.

But people who leave their vehicles in bus lanes or handicapped spots harm other residents by, respectively, disrupting traffic and making life hard for people who really need to park in reserved spots. The town's policies should dissuade people from doing so.

Finally, the increases should bring about \$37,000 to the town every year. That's not a huge chunk of money, but neither is it chump change, and the town likely will find a creative use for it that contributes to our already high quality of life.

All in all, this is an excellent opportunity to dissuade people from poor parking etiquette — and help take a little bit of the burden off residential taxpayers.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The above editorials are the opinions solely of The Daily Tar Heel Editorial Board and were reached after open debate. The board consists of four board members, the associate opinion editor, the opinion editor and the DTH editor. The 2005-06 DTH editor decided not to vote on the board and not to write board editorials. Address concerns to Public Editor Elliott Dube at dube@email.unc.edu.

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FROM THE DAY'S NEWS

"I spent all those years in a North Vietnamese prison camp, kept in the dark. ... Why the hell would I want to do that all over again?"

SEN. JOHN MCCAIN, QUOTED BY THE NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, ON WHY HE WOULDN'T ACCEPT THE VICE PRESIDENCY

EDITORIAL CARTOON

By Doug Marlette, Tribune Media Services



COMMENTARY

'Activist' groups too often put artifice above injustice

Roughly four times a year, with the banality of the changing seasons, opposing activist groups clash on campus in a veritable Charity Death Match.

There are religious fanatics and atheists, war supporters and decriers, pro-lifers and pro-choicers.

There are pamphlets and paranoia, crosses and coat hangers, peace signs and politics. There is dogma seeping like fetid fundraiser wine from every brick of the vicinity.

Elsewhere, there are crumbling communities, war-torn families and confused, pregnant women with swollen feet and sore ears.

This is not to say that visual demonstrations are unwarranted; America was undeniably built on them. There are few images more moving than the poignant, resolved faces of civil rights marchers, and there is nothing more exhilarating than a revolution born of rally cries.

But a problem — and even an injustice — arises when movements are all rally and no revolution. There are countless "awareness" campaigns in full swing at any given moment, and most of them are little more than masturbatory self-righteousness.

The vast majority of Americans are "aware" of poverty, war, workers' issues and reproductive rights. It's time to stop shouting and start sweating.

The Live 8 concerts, including the Sept. 30 version on campus, epitomize the exhibitionistic tendencies that protests have unfortunately begun to assume. For all the emotional chords that the musicians struck, and for all the heart-wrenching images flashed across giant projection screens, there was no direct solicitation for donations, no concrete call to action and no tangible solution to the heavily advertised problem.

Heightened awareness is invaluable. But I very seriously



SARA BOATRIGHT
KEEP 'EM ON THEIR TOES

doubt that a single mother of six in a Third World country woke up one morning and thought, "What I really need today is for Pink Floyd to reunite for a live set."

Contrast Live 8 with Katrina relief efforts and the difference between "awareness" and true activism becomes obvious.

Most national, local and campus groups opted for minimum advertising and maximum aid. Habitat for Humanity immediately began registering volunteers for future rebuilding, and campus organizations united for a decisively successful fundraising effort. Hurricane relief campaigns traded the gloss for the grind, and in doing so, they promoted communal progress rather than reunion tours.

The innate human need to help others suggests a sincerity that demands sanctity, and the bombastic noise of self-interested interest groups is slowly destroying that grace. A worthy cause demands far more exertion than exhibition, and when activists do more screaming than serving, they deflect attention unjustly from their causes to themselves.

Protest and charity have begun to don a cloak of romanticism, whip-stitched into an awkward patchwork of image and intention. American culture has become inundated with overblown, black-and-white visions of half-hearted fundraising and activism overcome by ego.

Among the most perplexing is the smattering of "benefits" from

Hollywood to Hillsborough, heavily publicized events in which the local elite discuss poverty and AIDS over champagne and crudites. Far more might be accomplished if everyone would just go home and open their checkbooks.

Unfortunately, activism in many circles has become less about charity and more about campaigning. Politicians handle such issues as Roe v. Wade as if they were Molotov cocktails, ready to incinerate their careers the moment they place a pinkie toe on one side of the controversial fence.

But all the hedging speeches and picket lines leave little time for mutually beneficial policymaking. Anger and avoidance have taken the place of open dialogue.

In matters of religion and war as well, personal ideology trumps the societal ideal. I wonder who among those espousing their philosophy in the Pit, whether exalting or denouncing the doctrine at hand, has spent a day in a homeless shelter.

Moreover, I wonder whether the white knuckles clasp propaganda posters have held the hand of a pregnant 15-year-old. I wonder whether the voices straining to deliver haughty convictions have counseled the hopeless. I wonder whether the pristine ivory backs draped in benefit-night satin have bent beneath the weight of hostile stares and hungry children.

I wonder whether the faces behind today's cries of opposition have looked upon the suffering from which their "activism" siphons action.

And if they have, I wonder why they're only exerting their voices when there is still so much work to be done.

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READERS' FORUM

Poker is a game of skill, not merely luck of the draw as columnist states

TO THE EDITOR: If Sports Editor Daniel Malloy doesn't want to watch poker on television, he can simply change the channel.

Poker is becoming a staple of American culture, and it is here to stay. Your comparison of high-stakes poker to competitive tiddlywinks is ludicrous.

Perhaps you should actually do some research into what you are going to write on before you make these off the wall accusations.

"The reality is that poker is 90 percent luck." This could possibly be the dumbest thing I've heard in quite some time.

If you really think poker is 90 percent luck, then how can people make a living playing? Wouldn't they all be broke? Are the people who play high-stakes poker just incredibly blessed with being the luckiest people in the world?

Big-name poker pros make final tables and win all the time. Why?

Poker is a skill game, and they are better than most everyone else.

I could continue my dissection of your column, but I'm trying to keep this around 300 words.

Hopefully, this is enough to inspire you to actually research a topic before you decide to write about it.

Then next time I read one of your pieces, I won't have wasted five minutes of my day.

Marc Trovero
Senior
Economist

Speak Out

We welcome letters to the editor and aim to publish as many as possible. In writing, please follow these simple guidelines: Keep letters under 300 words. Type them. Date them. Sign them; make sure they're signed by no more than two people. If you're a student, include your year, major and phone number. Faculty and staff: Give us your department and phone number. The DTH edits for space, clarity, accuracy and vulgarity. Bring letters to our office at Suite 2409 in the Student Union, e-mail them to editdesk@unc.edu, or send them to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, N.C., 27515. All letters also will appear in our blogs section.

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