

The Daily Tar Heel

95th year of editorial freedom

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Editorials

Movement needs momentum

The Carolina Gay and Lesbian Association began its Tenth Annual Lesbian and Gay Awareness Week Friday. A panel discussion on religion and lesbians and gay men, a lecture on homosexuality among Native Americans and an open discussion with an AIDS patient are some of the worthwhile programs the group has organized for this week.

Today is also Blue Jeans Day, when the CGLA asks those who support the civil rights of all people to wear blue jeans to campus.

Most students aren't aware of Blue Jeans Day, and of those who do know about it, few have let it influence their wardrobes. A few ardent supporters of the CGLA have donned their denims especially for the occasion, and a few ardent homophobes have been very careful to wear plaid, polyester or corduroy to signify their disagreement with the goals of the group.

Most students' choice of leg-wear is not much of an indication of their stand on the issue of civil rights, but a reflection of what the weather was like when they awoke. Quite a few liberal, progressive students threw on a pair of shorts this morning ten minutes before their first class, and any number of anti-homosexual conserva-

board opinion

tives slipped into a pair of Levi's with the same lack of thought.

A meaningful political statement can't be as low-key and ambiguous as wearing an ordinary article of clothing on a day when hundreds of uninformed or apathetic students will be wearing the same thing. And obviously, the CGLA doesn't want to ask students to wear something out of the ordinary that they might not have available at home.

An alternative would be for the group to set up a table in the Pit to distribute some emblem that students could pick up and wear as a sign of open support for civil rights. An obvious choice for this would be the pink triangle, a symbol adopted by the homosexual community as a statement of support for homosexual rights.

The pink triangle is a powerful symbol for all people. The Nazis in Germany forced homosexuals to wear it sewn on their garments. Today, it can be a reminder of the horrors of a society in which all civil rights were eradicated — a better reminder than a common pair of blue jeans.

Students fighting for gay and lesbian rights shouldn't be afraid to make bold statements. Civil rights have never been achieved by anything less.

Coke cans with mice — nice

The Coca-Cola Co. is so nice.

The company has devoted some of its soft drink cans to commemorating the 15th anniversary of Walt Disney World, the Orlando, Fla., theme park. Those who plunk their 55 cents into a vending machine will find shiny aluminum likenesses and peppy descriptions of Dumbo, Tinker Bell, Snow White and the like immortalized on cans of Cherry Coke, Diet Coke and regular Coke.

Habitual seekers of intellectual stimuli who have already memorized the nutrition information on the side of a Diet Coke can — protein, zero; fat, zero; calories, zero; sodium, very low — will relish the inestimable social lessons represented by their favorite Disney characters:

■ "Have you ever seen an elephant fly?" reads the description under a bashfully posed, jauntily capped pachyderm. "Dumbo does, by turning an embarrassment into an advantage and proving his ears are worth their weight in more than just peanuts." The reader will be heartened to learn of a social outcast who managed to overcome his disability and turn it into

a commercial goldmine.

■ "Spunky, flirty and always ready for fun, when Mickey's girlfriend speaks, you'll find the little guy is usually all ears," says the blurb under a manic-looking Minnie Mouse mug. So Miss "M" is not really the demure, furry little rodent the reader has always imagined, but a sleazy, domineering temptress in mouse heels.

■ "According to the Magic Mirror, she's the fairest of them all — but the only fruit her good fortune seems to bear is a poison apple — courtesy of the jealous wicked queen," reads the description under a pursed-lipped Snow White on a Cherry Coke can. The reader is presented with the false value that existence is wholly shaped by outward appearance. And a woman who lacks self-esteem to the point of harboring an intense death wish against a contemporary has a problem not to be taken lightly.

The Coca-Cola Co. must be commended for its generous efforts to entertain the public and promote social good. And all while striking a healthy deal with the Disney people. Isn't that nice? — J.G.

The Daily Tar Heel

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Readers' Forum

'Bigot hunt' becomes all-consuming

Keith Poston

Guest Writer

accused of bigotry to defend and explain himself.

The key to this puzzle is that most of the people who make loose charges of racism or bigotry do so for fun and profit. It is much easier for supporters of divestment, for example, to call anyone who opposes them a racist than it is to sit down and explain why the opposition should support divestment. They themselves typically hold all the real earmarks of racism and bigotry: the closed mind, the reluctance to look closely, the eagerness to prosecute, the sloppy logic designed only to prop up a foreordained conclusion, the inability to contemplate another side of the question at hand and sheer obsessiveness. In a word, it never occurs to them that it may be wrong. They are content as long as they belong to a group that sanctions their behavior. Their real definition of bigotry is "whoever digresses with us." This is about as bigoted an outlook as it is possible to have. The idea that all closed-mindedness is on one side is hardly the mark of an open mind, is it? Yet we have to live with the oppressive presumption that this is true. Conservatives constantly have to prove that we don't practice vices in which liberals may indulge with impunity.

There was a brief moment when conservatives held sway. It is generally referred to as "the McCarthy era." We don't even

have a name for which the much longer era in which we still live, when loose charges and even official presumptions of bigotry and racism are treated as normal. If Joe McCarthy accused you of communism, at least he was talking about something specific and definable. You could say "Prove it." And the burden of proof was on him. If he were even technically wrong, he stood a price to pay in disgrace, and he certainly has paid it. Today nobody remembers when he was right.

By contrast, charges of "bigotry," "racism," "homophobia," etc., are nebulous. Nobody is quite sure what they mean, but they arouse group hostilities that can hurt the accused. And the burden of proof is on the defendant. There is no clear criteria of truth, which makes the charges all the harder to refute. And the accuser seldom pays any penalty for false, loose, or downright malicious accusations. Virtual slander can be cost-free.

Do not be duped into believing that one side has a monopoly on the good and righteous. One day, you may have to defend yourself from charges of racism only because you question the logic of divestment, or be labeled a "homophobe" or a bigot simply because you do not want your student fees funding the CGLA, so be prepared.

No wonder bigot-hunting is a popular sport. But we may be looking for bigotry in all the wrong places.

Keith Poston is a sophomore political science major from Fayetteville.

Team shouldn't get grief

Editor's note: The author is captain of the UNC wrestling team.

To the editor:

I understand the need for objective reporting on the outcome of athletic events and the need to editorialize on overall team performance. But as a wrestler who has recently completed his collegiate athletic career, I take offense to the personal attacks levied at the members of the basketball team in Scott Fowler's "The Far Side" ("Heels left long again," March 23).

The UNC wrestling team was ranked fifth in the country throughout the 1986-87 season. On March 19-22, we too were competing in an NCAA tournament in which we aspired to dethrone the nine-time national champion, the University of Iowa. And while our goal of winning the tournament was not unrealistic, we did not attain it; we placed seventh.

The score attested to the fact that we, as a team, did not wrestle up to our capabilities. But this was not due to a lack of effort. Placing seventh out of all the country's collegiate wrestling programs, an overall impressive performance, should not and did not leave us ashamed.

An article conveying a sense of disappointment with our tournament performance would not have been out of bounds. But if the writer instead had resorted to pointing fingers and levying personal attacks to say we did not live up to expectations, I would have taken offense. But fortunately, jabs such as, "If you feel compelled to point fingers for the Tar Heels' latest travesty, you'll need two hands," were withheld from the report on the wrestling tournament. Fowler did not resist this compulsion in his story.

While the final score made it painfully clear that the Tar Heels came up short, why must Fowler choose phrases such as, "... who blew UNC's last chance for redemption by taking and missing an off-balance two-point shot" that do not do justice to our players' efforts? Why should Ranzino Smith have to open up the DTH and



read this, when it was the only shot he missed all day?

It is not as if the team members had planned to have a bad day. And Fowler, who has never experienced the pressures of the quarterfinals of an NCAA tournament, has no right to imply that they did. While the outcome of the game needed to be reported and relevant statistics needed to be told, I feel that the overall tone of Fowler's article is uncalled for. Let our goal be to have the best basketball season possible and not harp on missed chances. Hats off to Dean Smith and the 1986-87 basketball team.

JOE SILVESTRO
Senior
Speech Communications

Use freshmen, not criminals

To the editor:

In response to the letter of Patrick Anders and Dal Sparrow ("Replace animals with criminals in the lab," March 25), we must disagree with the conclusion that criminals represent the optimal substitute for animals in scientific experimentation.

Whereas we also are opposed to infliction of unnecessary pain and suffering upon innocent animals, we feel strongly that some forms of research are necessary in order to promote

the interests of the population in general. Sacrifices must be made. Using criminals, however, is not the answer to society's search for scientific knowledge.

Given the very nature of convicted criminals, their experience does not represent that of the general populace. First, their physical histories (i.e., probable drug and alcohol abuse) are likely to cause discrepancies in experimental drug testing data. Second, the very fact that these convicts got caught and hired poorly trained lawyers in their defense indicates that they are less able to cope with mental duress and strain, and are not good subjects for a forced participation program. Finally, some of these convicts might actually be innocent, and it would be cruel to end their lives unnecessarily. We recommend another group of society be chosen to participate in these experiments: college freshmen.

Yes, college freshmen. Experience shows that this societal sub-group doesn't mind informal experimentation but is young enough not to have been destroyed by its efforts thus far. Its "value added" is often lower than that of convicts, who are wholly supported by the state for years and years. Thus society's costs would be lower. Also, there are more freshmen than little white rats. Lastly, it is apparent that some of them have such a strong sensitivity to the "abuse" of animals that

they might be very willing to lay down their bodies (in part or whole) in order that other critters remain free and happy.

The benefit for the researchers is that their results would no longer be skewed by any personal feelings developed toward their subjects. This has often been the case with little white rats. Researchers would then treat the freshmen in the way advocated by Sparrow and Anders — as non-entities.

We know where our sympathies lie. Our question is: Anders and Sparrow, how far are you willing to go to protect "Fluffie?"

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Letters policy

■ All letters and columns must be signed by the author, with a limit of two signatures per letter or column. Name, year in school, major and phone number should be submitted.

■ All letters must be typed, double-spaced on a 60-space line, for ease of editing.

■ The DTH reserves the right to edit letters.

DTH film reviewers display incompetence

To the editor:

I would like to express my exasperation with the DTH arts desk, specifically its film reviewers. The quality of the film reviews in the DTH this year has been a great disappointment, and I have found it especially difficult to sit back helplessly as quality filmwork continues to be dismissed by negligent criticism.

The most recent example, Kelly Rhodes' review, "Lackluster plot, poor acting rust 'Tin Men'" (March 24), is representative of the string of feeble attempts to judge new films. Rhodes, as do most of her fellow DTH reviewers, has a curious idea of how one should discuss a film's merits. In the aforementioned review, she limits her criticism to an assessment of the actors' performances and to the number of belly-laughs they were able to provoke. Since film is a director's medium, it is confounding that there was no mention or discussion of Barry Levinson and what he intended to do both

as writer and director of the film. Can we really assume we can discuss a film with virtually no regard to the script, art design, editing, music or direction?

My purpose is not so much to discredit Rhodes as it is to point out what I believe to be the major problem with the ever-widening field of film and theater criticism. In a time when every newspaper, magazine and local news station, however small, feels compelled to establish an entertainment guide as a consumer service, reviews are necessarily reduced to capsize overviews that in the end say nothing.

The best critics make expert use of what little space they have. But the rest too often sacrifice argument for personal preferences. What is most often missing is real understanding of the elements of film and how the film maker manipulates them. Without this, the critic cannot possibly know what he (or she) is talking about. To my mind, not to know this is as irresponsible as covering a news event with little regard to

getting the facts right.

The DTH reviews, I fear, are symptomatic of this current devaluation of film criticism. Rhodes' pronouncements are only so much personal opinion, and the reader comes away annoyed at having indulged her. She, like so many others, does not persuade.

I would be interested in seeing occasional reviews written by members of UNC's Radio, Television and Motion Picture faculty, as they are in a better position to assess films. But if the DTH insists that the "cinema" column remain a student venture, I would just as soon prefer it be dropped altogether, better to leave the task of discriminating film quality to the individual than to promote questionable and insufficient exegesis by inept reviewers.

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