

Perspectives

Student activism: a duty to community



Randy Williams

columnist

believe that power and responsibility are intricately related. Here, power can be defined as the capacity to influence people, events, and the environment.

I believe that power requires responsibility, and that many social problems arise when power is used without emphasis on the communal duty of non-harm.

Because we live in communities, our actions will inevitably be felt by other people. This means that whether we like it or not, we have power. Our task then, is to decide how we want to use that power; how we want to influence people and the environment.

Most people, whether they cite scripture, ethical imperatives, or their own hearts, wish to impact their world in a positive way. These people do not want to harm people, nor do they want to harm the environment. Therefore, we must hold all of our actions to this ethical standard.

Unfortunately, in contemporary America it has become easy not to think about the implications of our actions because we rarely have to confront them. We can buy gas from a Shell station, without knowing that the oil came at the cost of displacing indigenous people from their lands. We put up posters of naked women without thinking about social implications. We throw away excessive amounts of paper

without considering where it goes and if such a process of waste disposal and consumption can be sustained. And so on.

As an activist I am dedicated to the project of increasing people's awareness of the implications of specific actions. Certain actions, I think, can quite clearly be linked to the exploitation of others and the

harmful actions. These groups have joined together over the last three months to diagnose the state of student activism at UNCA. GRASP UNCA is a two-part event and the product of the excessive dialogue between these activists. The first part of GRASP UNCA will take place on Tuesday, Jan. 27 in the Highsmith Center Lounge at 7 p. m. In multiple student-facilitated discussion groups, students and faculty will share what their experiences have been like at UNCA, in regards to student activism, and suggest ways that it can be improved on campus. All of the attendants, if willing, will become a part of the new activist infrastructure that will be contacted via e-mail for all of the upcoming events. The second part of the event will be dedicated to brainstorming ways that we can increase student activism on campus. The list produced should be impressive.

The second part of the event will take place on February 18th, again to take place in the Highsmith Center Lounge at 7 pm. This event will act as a "briefing" of all the issues that campus, communal, national, and international activist groups are dealing with. Additionally, at this event there will be literature available from all the major grassroots organizations in the community, nation, and world.

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environment. My task is to educate myself and other people as to which actions those are, so that we may abstain from them, and live up to our ideal of non-harm.

There are different groups on campus who work to highlight and bring attention

It looks like in the upcoming semester there will be more activist events than in any previous one. Organizations like A to Zebra, Amnesty International, the Bahai Club, the Ecology Club, and WAIL are kicking off ambitious semester agendas which will include demonstrations, events, and more.

This column, to appear with frequency over this semester, is intended to articulate the philosophy behind this movement. It is an exploration of the reasons behind student activism. In each column I will try to explain why I am an activist.

Although I am primarily an independent activist, I am fundamentally interested in facilitating inter-group communication and support. I hope that my rationale can serve as a window, through which other people can understand the motivational forces

behind this semester's increase in student activism. One of the most important reasons why I am an activist is because I

I believe that power requires responsibility, and that many social problems arise when power is used without emphasis on the communal duty of non-harm.

Letters to the Editor

Alumnus dissects SGA proposals

Dear Editor:

It was with dismay that I read that some elements of SGA wanted to attempt to curtail *The Banner's* voice.

In the articles and editorials related to the effort, I saw two justifications for the bills affecting *The Banner*:

1. Denying *The Banner* campus commission funding because of its failure to file paperwork or be approved as a student organization through SGA-related procedures.

Please correct this letter with an editor's note if I'm wrong, but doesn't *The Banner* publish the student newspaper via a contract with the university?

If this is so, then *The Banner* would exist as a contracted entity independent of SGA and Campus Commission jurisdiction.

2. Reducing circulation because of litter/waste programs.

This is rather specious grounds, methinks—to punish the newspaper because of the behavior of its subscribers.

Would it not be more productive to attempt to install proper receptacles on the campus?

I would suggest this, but (pardon my waning memory if I am wrong) UNCA already has recycling and refuse containers galore.

These justifications amount to badly cut fig leaves for censorship, and I would think that UNCA stu-

dents would see through these little disguises. Which they did, apparently.

The lopsided vote defeating the censorship bills was the best decision the Student Senate could have made.

I would hope they would continue to display the wisdom to say "no" to these sorts of blatant attempts at censorship.

James Hertsch
1997 Alumnus, mass communication

Editor's Note:

James Hertsch is correct on all counts regarding the attempted Student Government Association regulation of *The Banner*. In December, SGA Residential Senator Doug Jones submitted a bill seeking to revoke *Banner* funding because we had not gone through what he thought was the proper channel to get funding, the SGA. As Mr. Hertsch points out, *The Banner* deals directly with the university for funding—not via recognition from the SGA.

A blast from the past

Dear Editor,

"Gaggers," pardon this letter, for it's gag-worthy content, but I must respond to two of your fellow "gag-mates" messages sent on behalf of Ms. Sulock's Nov. 13 article

on the Judgment House. Heather Garren and Tanner Gamble both manifest critical points concerning Christianity in their letters but refuse to notice their own "misguided" opinions.

First of all, as a Christian, I do not consider Halloween as the, as Ms. Garren was so quick to assume, "devil's holiday."

I am sure some her Christian pals do, in fact, place that title on All Hallow's Eve, but I am not one of those people.

Frankly, I know many Christians who celebrate Halloween with their family and friends and have no reservations doing so.

Only if one chooses to consider that night the "devil's holiday," does it then become offensive to the Christian community.

By allowing yourself to associate devilish characteristics with this holiday, you obviously are not doing your part as a true Christian.

Ideally, the Christian would want to portray love in everything he does.

What is wrong with sharing a happy, fun-filled, and Christian, nonetheless, moment with one's family?

Does it really matter what the occasion, as long as love is completely expressed in the celebration?

If you find some sort of betraying qualities in celebrating one holiday stemming from the old pagan festivals, forget about your beloved Christmas fiascos.

Ever decorated a Christmas tree? I bet your Christian church even installs one lovely evergreen into its

sanctuary every holiday season, right? Woops, don't let your other Christian pals know.

This celebration, too, has its origins in the pagan rituals of long ago.

Go ahead and regard Christmas with the same amount of "disgust" you muster up for the "devil's holiday" because, historically, it's one too.

And to Tanner Gamble, please spare us the santimony of your sermon in disguise.

By stating that, "We possess a faith that transcends all in this world," your own close-mindedness virtually shines through.

True, Christianity does prove the "transcending faith" to you personally, but let us not forget the many other faith's devoutly worshipped on this planet.

Because one does not share the same faith in your God, is not an invitation for you to label him a "non-believer."

No, he may, in fact, believe very strongly, just not in the same context as yourself.

It appears you have not "spread his love and salvation to all" but, rather, your judgment.

And, I might add, who are you to judge?

Who is anyone to blast down another's faith with the hypocrisy of their own?

In this case, and probably this case only, I am proud to play the "devil's advocate."

Paula Carter
Freshman, undeclared

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Our telephone number is (704) 251-6586. Our campus e-mail address is banner@unca.edu. An on-line version of *The Banner* is also available at <http://www.unca.edu/banner/>

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Letters should be typed, double-spaced, and should not exceed 300 words. Letters for publication should also contain the author's signature, classification, major or other relationship with UNCA. The deadline for letters is noon on Tuesday. If you have a submission, you can send it to *The Banner*, 208A Carmichael Hall, One University Heights, Asheville NC 28804.

The deadline for display ads and the FYI calendar is on Friday at noon. The deadline for classified ads is at noon on Tuesday.

Letters to the editor may be submitted to *The Banner* at One University Heights, 208A Carmichael Hall, Asheville, NC 28804, e-mailed to banner@unca.edu, or submitted via The Banner Online. Letters should be typed, single-spaced, and limited to 300 words or less. Submissions may be edited for space and content. Letters to the editor must be signed and include the author's classification and major or other relationship to UNCA.