

# Opinions

The Banner

## Editorial

### Bring the noise

#### Wishing you were queer

Last weekend UNCA hosted its first (of many, according to literature professor David Hopes) gay and lesbian studies conference. Hosting such a conference is good for the university for many reasons.

As North Carolina's public liberal arts university, UNCA's foundation is a rigorous curriculum that delves deeply into the histories, politics, arts, and literature of the many cultures that have contributed to the rise of humanity. A conference such as the one held this past weekend serves our academic purpose in that it gives a platform to those who seek to enlighten our community on the contributions of a diverse minority group to our larger American society. It is of utmost importance that we give such groups as many opportunities as possible to educate us about their contributions in the form of classes and academic departments, for these acts of education complete the unfinished story that our mainstream, traditional studies begin.

An annual gay and lesbian studies conference would also help to link the thriving gay communities present both at UNCA and in the Asheville area. By hosting such a conference, the university not only formally acknowledges the presence of gay faculty, students, and Asheville citizens, it makes their contributions to their respective communities legitimate and appreciated.

In the future, we should hope to see more conferences for the heretofore "fringe" elements of academia: gay and lesbian studies, Africana studies, and women's studies, just to name a few. We applaud campus leaders such as James Pitts from academic affairs, Jan Harrow and David Hopes from literature, and Robert Lange from humanities for making this conference happen and, in doing so, cementing UNCA's place in the upper echelon of the national academic order and providing a key link between city and university.

### Fight the power

If you think that changing university housekeepers' work hours to a nighttime graveyard shift will make their department more cost-efficient—think again. While the Outsource Committee reasons that it will get more bang for its buck by rearranging academic building housekeepers' schedules (as well as their lives), it seems to us that what is really going on here is that the OUTSOURCE committee is looking to find a way to get our housekeepers to quit so that their job can be OUTSOURCED.

We realize that the UNCA administration was forced by the Republican-controlled North Carolina legislature to investigate the feasibility of outsourcing university support offices. However, what the legislature fails to realize is that the housekeepers are part of the UNCA community, and they provide an important sense of stability to the university that is worth the extra bucks that fringe benefits paid to housekeepers might cost.

It is time for our administrators to stand up to the legislature and say that UNCA will not outsource its valuable community, or make them work ungodly hours in the name of a solid bottom line. It is sad to see that UNCA may be giving in to the state legislature and operate like a faceless corporation.

The fact is the value of the UNCA community cannot be measured in dollar figures. It is a priceless asset that the administration would be partly killing by adopting the change of hours.

Furthermore, there's the following question that must be asked: What's next? Today, it's the housekeepers who face the plotting of the outsourcing committee, but tomorrow it may be the printing services, and the next day it could be the Housing Office.

We encourage the administration to band together with other universities across the state and tell the legislature that outsourcing is not a practice that the universities wish to engage in. While such a move might be seen as "biting the hand that feeds you," when the hand feeds you poison, it should be bitten.

Besides, if our fundraising campaign is highly successful, UNCA will hopefully be in the position to retain our housekeepers (and other service employees) as direct UNCA employees, and let them work decent hours so that they can enjoy a family life like most of the world, including the UNCA administrators who work a regular daytime shift.

### Mud in your Ndiaye

There's nothing like a little Tar Heel score losing to ruin an otherwise memorable NCAA tournament. After losing in Saturday night's national semifinal to Utah, Carolina's senior co-captain Makhtar Ndiaye falsely accused Utah Freshman Britton Johnson of aiming repeated racial slurs at him. On Monday, Ndiaye recanted his accusation and issued the lame excuse of being overcome by the negative emotions that accompany losing a basketball game.

The world of sports has paved the way for much racial healing and harmonizing in this country. Makhtar Ndiaye's false racial accusations are not only the lowest form of unsportsmanlike conduct, they have tarnished Carolina basketball and our state.

## Pick brains over bikini lines



**Teresa Calloway**  
columnist

Well, it's springtime again, and despite the abundance of sunshine and blossoming trees, I'm not altogether looking forward to it. Despite the fresh air and peeking buds, there is this one aspect of springtime which makes me long for piles of snow and bitter winds: the conversations we women begin to have with each other.

For many a woman, you see, the cycle of seasons is not simply indicative of the earth's location in relation to the sun. Instead, it dictates a cycle far more relevant to our personal growth (or lack thereof).

As fall descends upon us, we pull light cardigans over our fading sunburns, take a drive on the parkway, and discuss our relationships. When the radio guy predicts "wintery mixes," we know the time has come for a heavy coat, coffee at Beanstreets, and a good old-fashioned talk about religion with a little sex mixed in for good measure.

Winter drags on, and snowstorms leave us without power. What is there to do but share our thoughts on the Israeli peace negotiations? But the power comes back on, the snow clears, green things emerge timidly from the soil, trees unfaithfully remember to grow new leaves, and, in celebration of the world's revival, we all spread blankets on

the grass and have intimate conversations. About our thighs.

What?

Well, it's shallow, it's ridiculous, and, sadly enough for me as a woman, it's true.

During winter, it is impossible for any female who is serious about her gender to make comments about her body, being, as it is, wrapped in clothing until it is no longer an issue. Out of sight, out of mind, as the saying goes. With their bodies out of sight, females are able to explore themselves in a serious manner, and become intelligent creatures. Whoever heard anyone lament thick ankles when they're hidden beneath wool socks?

But spring, it seems, gives us permission to be shallow. Go ahead, it urges, tell that girl you hardly know how much you weigh, and, if it's more than her, she'll be your friend. You'll laugh for hours about the Freshmen 15' and how long it's been since you made a trip to the gym. In short, you'll bond. Do it, says spring. And you do. Do any of you realize how many weight confessions I have heard in the past two weeks?

But this year, the winter was cold and long. The more layers of clothing I put on, the more comfortable I became discussing themes of *The Odyssey*. And I, for one, am unwill-

ing to give up the intellectual curiosities of winter. Why, just today I said, "I wonder if male actors playing female parts in Greek theater might be an exploration of gender roles," and "We seem to approach the history of Greece with an certain reverence not present in Humanities lectures on non-Western cultures." I said it loud, in the presence of others, wearing nothing save underwear, jeans, a tee, and sandals. It's pure insanity!

This spring I urge females to abandon the frivolous and, truth to tell, boring exchanges so prevalent in warm weather, and talk to each other like you're up to your waist in snow. If need be, take a scarf with you when you sunbathe as a gentle

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reminder to ask people why Clinton is using NASA technology to examine environmental deterioration in African nations without examining environmental policy here in the United States. I won't begrudge anyone an aesthetically-pleasing body, and ask only that it might be accompanied by a vibrant intellect. No, that's not true. I ask one more thing. Don't tell me how much you weigh unless I ask.

Why? Because we're wasting time, and because no one really cares. When we talk about our bodies to

another female, do we imagine it is of any interest of her? No. Our motives are purely selfish: we talk because we want to, and she listens because she knows she'll get to talk next. In short, we're all just verbalizing, sympathizing, and waiting our turn. We do it because we're women, because hearing others confess their flaws makes us feel more adequate, and because society gives us permission. But I did a lot of thinking this winter (when it was sanctioned) and a decided, in the words of David Rothman, that it's all a load of cookie.

In addition to being a waste of time, because the conversation yields nothing of value, discussing your physical state is a tremendous waste of energy. I respectfully submit that, if you're really concerned about your appearance, go to the gym, and if you aren't, shut up.

In my newfound and unprecedented warm-weather intellect, I have searched my soul high and low for a quality I can admire above all others, and I discovered one that seems to encompass all the rest. I found it not, as one might guess, in a human being, but rather in the twilight air of a spring evening humming with insects, color, and the invisible growth of flowers.

As spring unfolds itself before my eyes, I am awestruck by the wisdom of the earth. Having seen this season come and go on millions of occasions, the earth doesn't worry about the vestiges of winter around its middle, but pushes forth new growth with a quiet confidence that whatever happens, it will be beautiful. This spring, as you shed your extra layers, I beg that you take notice of the wisdom which surrounds you, and allow yourself to be part of the wisdom of spring.

## Fighting for gender equality



**Vanessa Harper**  
columnist

Violence against women, both in and outside the home, remains a widespread and blatant violation of women's rights around the globe. Women are often silenced, forced into sexual slavery or prostitution, exploited for the purpose of domestic servitude, and still viewed as men's objects to be seen and used, not heard. Women in Afghanistan are beaten for violating strict Taliban dress codes which require them to be covered from head to toe, and for appearing in public unaccompanied by a man. Women in Algeria are sometimes beheaded for their failure to wear head coverings.

Many young girls throughout Africa are forced against their will to undergo female circumcision and in Tanzania, women can be punished for not bearing children. In the United States, countless numbers of women are raped daily. The media portrays the proper and attractive way for women to look and as a result, thousands of women suffer from anorexia and low self esteem as they try to embody what their society deems to be the ideal woman.

In the United Arab Emirates, married women cannot work without their husband's consent, and

women in Guinea-Bissau have limited access to education.

Despite an increased willingness to promote women's rights, women around the world continue to encounter barriers of economic, political, and social discrimination. Laws protecting women's rights exist, but are often not enforced. Women, possessing the bodies where each human's life originated, are still thought to be and treated as inferior in many cultures. Even in the United States, a country that claims to have equal rights and opportunities for both sexes, women are still maligned. There is still a great deal of work to be done to assure women's rights are acknowledged, respected, enforced, and celebrated.

How is such a feat accomplished? It is difficult to know where to begin, and with as many issues, there is no end.

I'm sure each of you, attending this fine liberal arts university, have no prejudice against women and may claim to support and promote equality among all humans. But what have you done to support and promote this? Many of you may call yourselves feminists. Many of you act upon your convictions. Many of you do not.

In the United States, we are blessed with luxuries such as freedom of speech, choice of religion, and the right to the pursuit of happiness. We live in a culture where women can wear what they want, express their beliefs, and can choose whether to have a baby or terminate a pregnancy.

Women are supposed to be equal here in the eyes of the law. Then why do we still get paid a lesser salary than that of a man in certain occupations?

Why do I have at least two close friends who failed to see justice served after being raped? Why do instances of dirty men, assuming my submission, grabbing my butt, and commenting on the size of my breasts stick in my head as if each instance just happened today? Why do many women feel too ashamed to admit that a man raped her? Why don't more people do something about it?

America, being one of the most powerful and influential countries in the world, must take a strong position on the promotion of women's rights in order to educate its own people as well as those in other countries like the ones mentioned above. We must use our position to help the millions of women who are abused emotionally, physically, economically, and legally every day.

But how can this be accomplished when close-minded senators, such as our very own Jesse Helms, oppose a convention adopted by the United Nations General Assembly to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women? Oppose. What? How can someone in America, a man elected by the very men and women he is to serve in this state, oppose such a positive

attempt to secure women's rights?

The Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979. It is a culmination of more than 30 years of work by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, a group established in 1946 to monitor and promote women's rights. The convention plays an important role in bringing the female half of humanity into focus as a human rights concern and works to achieve equality for all women.

The convention entered into force as an international treaty on Sept. 3, 1981 after the 20th country ratified it. About 100 nations have agreed to be bound by its provisions.

The United States is not one of the nations who ratified the convention. This is due to senators, such as Jesse Helms, not thinking the issue is important enough to acknowledge and support.

Our second senator, Mr. Faircloth, chooses to sit passively on the fence, not wanting to voice an opinion either way. It is extremely important for our nation to acknowledge this convention and support it, in hopes of influencing other countries. It is through conventions such as these that issues about the equality of women can be most easily achieved on an ideologically and geographically vast scale.

If you honor women and support their equal rights, take action! Call your senators in Washington, D.C., and urge them to take a stand and promote CEDAW for the sake of all women around the world. You are their constituency, they are your public servants. Capitol Switchboard: (202) 224-3121.