

Opinion Page

April apathy

Only 590 of ECSU's 1590 students turned out to vote in the April 21 election.

The low voter turn-out comes at a time when ECSU is becoming more politically involved in the community it serves. Not only are three ECSU employees seeking public office, but the voter registration drives led by the newly formed Students for Jesse Jackson, have resulted in more than 500 new registered voters.

The right to vote is a precious freedom, a freedom enjoyed by a relatively small minority of the world's population. And it is vitally important that people exercise that right, even in a campus election.

ECSU's lower voter turn-out sends a disturbing message—that a large number of students are apathetic to the entire process of student government.

SGA's new elected officials have called for more student involvement in campus government and activities. We commend them for their intentions, and will support their efforts. But the elected leaders can only do so much; the rest is up to ECSU's students.

The Student Government President represents the students to the administration, the faculty, the Board of Trustees, Board of Governors and students from other schools. And the SGA President has broad powers over legislation, money matters, and appointments. It is the SGA President's responsibility, for example, to appoint members of the student court, and to appoint the student court's attorney general.

The elected officials of SGA—including the Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer—are committing their time, energy and talents on behalf of the students and the University. And even if students don't want to get involved in the day-to-day activities of government, the very least they can do, is exercise their right to choose the individuals who will represent them.

In his speech to ECSU during the Black History Month Assembly, Jonathan Jackson told ECSU students, "You are in the privileged seats. The real challenge is what you will do, and what you are doing," Jackson continued. "I challenge you to fulfill the work of generations that have died to help make your opportunities possible."

The opportunity to vote is the lifesblood of a free society.

This is a statement that bears repeating—especially to the 1,000 students who were too busy, or too indifferent, to exercise their right to vote April 21.



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The Compass

The Compass welcomes letters to the editor. Please send letters to Box 815, Elizabeth City State University, Elizabeth City, NC 27909. The Compass has been published by ECSU students since 1959 under the Department of Language, Literature and Communication. Dr. Anne Henderson, Chairperson. Faculty advisor: Stephen March.

Letters

Hazing column: Readers react

Carter unfair to Greeks, says sorority member

To The Editor:

Martin Carter's article in the last issue of *The Compass* advising freshmen to consider the abuses of hazing before pledging, was not only misleading, it also accused all campus Greeks of abusive hazing practices. As a member of a Greek organization for the past three years, I want to clarify several points.

First, although several Greek organizations have been reported in the past for abusive hazing practices, these have not been as frequently—or as abusively—as broken arms, legs, and ribs—as Mr. Carter suggested. Campus Greeks have usually conducted a disciplined pledging process, whereas the pledgee must be willing to submit his time and energy to learn the facts and history of the organization, as well as perform service projects for the community. In his article, Mr. Carter seems to be advising Greeks of their responsibilities and duties, when we already know our responsibility as campus leaders, especially with regard to hazing.

We know we have a responsibility to our Greek organization that condemns hazing practices; to our University that has a disciplinary policy against hazing; and to the State of North Carolina, that has enacted a state law making hazing a crime punishable by law.

As Greeks, we realize if we don't live up to these responsibilities we will have to face the consequences of suspension that will ban the pledging process altogether.

Greeks try to demonstrate a responsible leadership during the pledging period, and during the entire year. I have talked with many freshmen who have heard the exaggerated claims of hazing, like Mr. Carter has heard, but I advise them to learn more about the Greek organizations, by attending Rushes and Smokers, and by talking to the members individually.

Secondly, I think Mr. Carter's comment that Greeks do little or nothing to maintain a true brotherhood and sisterhood was unfair. On the whole, Greeks have a close-knit relationship, more so than the Greeks at neighboring campuses. And as far as maintaining a true sisterhood and brotherhood in our individual Greek organization, there is, and always will be, a special bond between its members. Therefore, Mr. Carter should not comment on what he knows nothing about.

It is hard for Greeks to keep up a positive image when articles such as Mr. Carter's, focus on the negative aspects. ECSU Greeks have performed many service projects for the community, such as collecting food, assisting and entertaining at nursing homes and hospitals, working at Albe-Marle Hope Line for Battered Women and Children, and assisting in national programs such as the Red Cross and the Salvation Army.

ECSU's administration has given us the platform we need to continue to foster responsible leadership without being closely monitored, or subjected to strict limitations, and the Greeks hope to continue to work hard and to strive to be the best young campus leaders as they can be.

LaGina O. Frink
 member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.

ECSU, stand up to abuse, says Greek advisor

To The Editor:

Your article on hazing was read with great interest. As graduate advisor to Delta Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (along with Ms. Myrtle Johnson), I want you and your readers to know that I am totally against any form of hazing. They know that hazing is not part of the pledging process and that it is strictly forbidden. I have made it perfectly clear that such actions will not be tolerated. Pledging is not a war so there should be no casualties.

It is quite unfortunate that these high incidents of deaths and mangled individuals have occurred in sororities and fraternities that represent the epitome of black women and men. It is the advisor's responsibility to reinforce to each undergraduate chapter the policy on hazing and the price they must pay should it occur (suspension, revocation of charter, etc.) Each national office has made it clear to each undergraduate chapter and each advisor that hazing will not be tolerated.

Wake up, advisors! Wake up Panhellenic Council! Wake up, undergraduates! Wake up, Graduate Chapters! This is the dawn of a new day. If individuals wishing to join your particular sorority/fraternity must pay with blood, then let it be the rushing blood of a "pumped-up" kid who has become excited over making the Chancellor's List; if he/she must pay in sweat, let it be sweat from his brow because he has toiled long and hard over a difficult class assignment; and if he/she must pay with tears, let them be tears of joy, because he/she has contributed some-

thing worthwhile to society, and can take his or her rightful place among the ranks of those who exemplify sisterhood and brotherhood.

As was stated in the column hazing is not just a local problem; it is a national problem. But in order to improve on the national level, we have to first clean up our back yards. Much of what was stated in Martin Carter's article has indeed occurred on our campus. It is time for pledgees to recognize that you don't have to take the physical abuse in order to gain your rightful "respect." Nowhere does it state in the guidelines, procedures or chapter by-laws that you have to submit to a "board" or "a foot," to gain respect. The mere fact that you were accepted is respect enough.

Have respect for yourself, pledgees; if you don't, no one else will.

I truly hope that at this pledge time each sorority and fraternity will do their best to make this period and enjoyable and pleasurable time. Pledging is meant to be a "memory" not a "memorial."

Jeanetta H. Hicks
 Graduate Advisor
 Delta Theta Chapter
 Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

LETTERS

Letters to the editor must be signed and include the writer's address and telephone number. They may be edited for length, clarity and taste, as well as for accuracy and grammar. Because of limited space, not all letters can be published. Concise letters have the best chance for publication. Send letters to *The Compass*, ECSU Box 815, Elizabeth City, NC 27909.

Guest Columnist

Blacks' fortunes are intertwined

By Chukundi Salisbury
 Guest Columnist

In order to improve the lives of the Black underclass, middle class Blacks must first understand that they are bonded to the Black underclass in such a way that neither will truly succeed until they are unified.

Many members of the Black middle class feel superior to poorer Blacks, and they often feel they have no responsibility for helping them. These middle-class Blacks are re-enacting an attitude prevalent among certain Blacks during the days of slavery. The favored Blacks who worked in "the big house" often felt they were better than the average slave who worked in the fields from dawn to dusk.

Still other members of today's Black middle-class feel a sense of obligation for their less fortunate brothers and sisters, but these

successful Blacks give money to their churches—to be used for low-income Blacks—instead of donating their time and energy.

Giving money is fine, but these more fortunate Blacks should also socialize with poorer blacks at churches and community functions, in order to achieve a deeper level of understanding of their problems. This will also help cement the emotional bonds between the two classes. By learning to understand and respect the problems of the Black underclass, middle-class Blacks will be better equipped to help them overcome their problems.

These problems include crime, drugs, poverty, broken homes, and a low-level of self-esteem among many black youths—a lack of faith in their ability to prevail in the economic mainstream.

To help solve these problems, the Black middle-class can help

the underclass organize more community block watches, and community awareness committees. The middle-class should also actively support local organizations, such as the YMCA, the YWCA and the Girls and Boys' Clubs of America.

By doing this, the Black middle-class can help get our young people off the street and into tutorial programs, community action groups, and on recreational sports teams.

The Black middle-class can also help by going into low-income communities and volunteering their time at community and recreational centers as coaches, advisors, and assistants. They should not think of this work as charity, but as an investment in the community.

The Black middle-class has the financial means, the education,

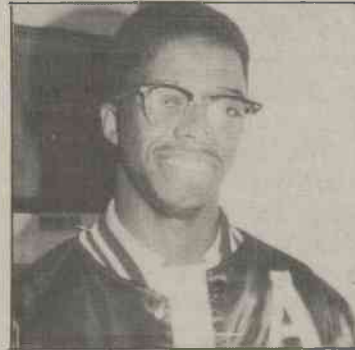
and the business skills to make difference in the lives of the Black underclass. The Black middle-class should work in the trenches of the low-income Black communities, helping their brothers and sisters by offering their time and emotional support, instead of trying to forget about their suffering.

By becoming more involved in the low-income communities, the Black middle-class can serve a positive role models to help low income blacks believe in themselves and resist the temptation of drugs and crime.

Since their economic and political fortunes are intertwined, the two classes must be united. Their efforts to survive and succeed in America. Only by helping others less fortunate, can the Black middle-class truly help themselves.

Viewpoint

"Do you think there is an internal prejudice among blacks?"



Kenneth Sumter Patterson, N.J.

"We should look at each other as who we are, not as how we want others to be, act or look. The internal part of a person is just as important as the external."



Loretta Thomas Plymouth, N.C.

"Yes, because foreigners of darker skin tones dislike Black Americans. They represent the fact that Blacks in this country do not seize the opportunities here, that they were never even given in their home countries."



Dr. C.C. Jones
 Director of ECSU's Honors Program

"Obviously, there is. It's rooted in the human condition. Prejudice is based on fear and answers the question that all need to be or feel superior to others."



Charles Jennings Goldsboro, N.C.

"Yes, there is. Because we not only see black and white prejudice, but that same attitude between lighter and darker skinned blacks."