

## OPINION/EDITORIAL

## Students vary on teens' No. 1 issue

by Mallory S.E. Floyd  
Register staff

"What is the number one issue facing American teens?" The answers among teens differ, but all come from the hearts of youth who want people to understand what's really on the minds of tomorrow's professionals and world leaders.

"The number one issue facing teens today is the spread of ignorance," said Nathan Postell, an 18-year-old from Maryland. "It's running rampant, and for today's teen it is in the form of a deadly disease: AIDS."

"Every year thousands of teenagers are infected with the disease and they don't even know it," said Postell. "In a time period when information is available, teenagers are still dying."

Serena Custis of Fayetteville,

N.C., said she felt confidence is a big issue. "It's really hard to choose one (issue) as the most important, but I believe that most of the problems of teens stem from lack of self confidence. There are too many followers and not enough leaders. People are so afraid of making their own tracks that they sink in the footprints of others. Nothing gets accomplished, nothing gets better."

Tamekia White of Bryan, Texas, feels strongly: "The number one issue facing Americans today is (teens) trying to solve the problems that our ancestors have put before us. I will admit that almost every generation has to fix the problems of its ancestors, but as the years go by, the problems seem to get worse and worse. I feel the adults of today could at least solve the major problems they have created. But no, they look to us to find the solutions

to problems that were created before my generation was ever born."

Jennifer Zeis of Bridgeport, Conn., said: "People tend to think of our generation as 'Generation X,' a derogatory term that implies that today's youth is a generation of slackers who really don't care about the world around them. There are so many teens today, that far surpass that negative stigma that are hardly ever recognized. It is a biased term that describes at most only a few."

In my opinion, the issue at the heart of all other issues is miseducation and a lack of accurate and factual information received by teenagers.

In many schools, teachers teach with outdated books, outdated lesson plans, and outdated views of the world. As a result schools end up producing uneducated students

by today's standards.

Most teens get their information from the "street," television, and print such as magazine and newspapers. Street information is almost always inaccurate and in this age of tabloid journalism, it's hard to tell the difference between what's fact, what's fiction, what's opinion, and what's advertisement.

One thing teens can do is become more unified rather than operate as a group of individuals. Adults also need to be more understanding of teens. So many adults are talking and few are listening. Teens should have more of a say in things that affect their lives. Teens should have a say in how issues and problems are dealt with because the day will come when the decision makers of tomorrow will be figuring out how to solve the problems created today.

## Black men must unite for preservation, success

by Ubong Silas  
Register staff

If 1995 was the year for "angry white males" to vent frustrations at the ballots toward a government they claim has treated them as second-class citizens, then 1996 may be the year oppressed black males rally in response.

Both groups are deeply affected by a Supreme Court 5-4 ruling that is unconstitutional to use race as a deciding factor in governmental contracts. The decision is not only disconcerting because of the number of jobs it will cost minorities (especially black males, who benefited least by affirmative action policies), but by the precedent against minorities it sets for future court cases. As black males we should not sit by idly while our adversaries greedily eat the "meat and potatoes" our parents battled so hard to snatch from the grasp of a racist government. We have a responsibility to fight for the few rights we have, even though it may seem trivial.

During the last decade we have seen many of our black sisters' and white women's careers skyrocket, cracking the glass ceiling in large part because of affirmative action, while the fragmented remains came

plummeting down on black males. We must unite for a greater cause with women and other minorities to regain a lost momentum. But first we must unite among ourselves. We must put aside those, Booker T. and Dubois type divisions, and "sing a song full of the faith..."

We can't look for help from the White House. Already Clinton has gotten a whiff of the stench of conservative compromise, and the odor is affecting his decisions. He's yet to take a crisp stand on affirmative action. Instead he has chosen to appease both sides by political double talk. And you can bet O.J.'s diminishing fortunes that Newt isn't going to come to our rescue, nor will any of the senators in "Gridlock R Us" Congress. It is time to look collectively to ourselves and not pine away wistfully for a "great" leader to gather the flock. It's not the size or even the success of a crusade that counts, but the goals which it tries to achieve. What is the goal? The goal is preservation of our families and dedication to the struggles of our ancestors. This is a call to battle; the enemy is no longer just society. No, the days of an oftentimes romanticized Civil Rights Movement are behind us. Today the enemy is not so obvious because the enemy lies within.

## Visit erases stereotype

by Ebony Reed  
Register staff

At first glance Conway Whitley fits a stereotype. He's the homeless person people watch walk up and down streets and even at times blame for his situation.

The Freedom Forum's Rainbow Institute students toured the Interfaith Counsel Community House in Chapel Hill, N.C., on Thursday, July 6, that houses people like Whitley.

Most of the students were not prepared for the stories that they were to hear, or the people they were to meet. These were people who had been laid off, had broken limbs or had bad luck.

Now all of a sudden, the people who most average Americans had never wanted to meet and thought of as dirty and mean had names. They had tangible faces that told stories.

Charity was not what this man was after. For example, Whitley, 40, had arrived at the shelter about a week ago. He was planning to go to Atlanta to look for work.

Whitley used to be a construction worker in Atlanta; now he does all types of odd jobs like cutting grass and painting.

This man does not fit the lazy mentality that I used to think of when I thought of homeless people.

As I spoke with him, it became clearer how Whitley lives, what challenges he faces, and why he used drugs. Before we went to the homeless shelter and I knew the story of Whitley, I purposely emptied my pockets so that none of them could steal from me. But as I stood there in the rain and smelled the smoke of Whitley's cigarette, I wished I had brought at least five dollars to give to him.

For the first time in my life I was glad I interviewed someone who is a depiction of a stereotype. I learned something that is not available in a book or in a classroom. I learned about people from the source itself.

Looking back on the interview, I feel pleased that Professor Elliott had pushed me out in the rain to continue the interview. The "old" Ebony would have ended the interview quickly out of fear. But instead Professor Elliott, gave me the push I needed both physically and emotionally to return and continue. That "old" Ebony who was afraid of people just because of how she had created stereotypes in her mind lost the battle.

If I could do anything I would make it mandatory for every high school graduate to visit a homeless shelter and be forced to look right in the eyes of pain. It would guarantee that many more could walk away with a new perspective on life and people. And maybe, just maybe, someone would walk away like I did and become a new person: a new and enlightened Ebony.

## Individual rights face legal challenges

by Apu Chakraborty  
Register staff

It has been a long held belief that history repeats itself. There were a dozen crusades, two world wars and two times the American public was gullible enough to vote an actor into the highest office in the land. Truly, history repeats itself, unless of course we are able to study history to prevent that phenomenon.

The world has yet to seriously sit down and contemplate its own past, because the great powers of the world are leading the human race into ultimate chaos by committing the same mistakes as their forebears; the United States is not aloof from this problem. Unfortunately that trend is being hastened by the recent conservative push in the American psyche.

This statement is not an instant condemnation of conservatives, nor is it a precursor to some socialistic manifesto, it is simply an opening statement to a sad look at America's return to some of the social and economic policies that have a great ability to destroy both this nation and the world.

Within the last month the conservative supreme court has passed a decision repealing affirmative action's full implementations, thus telling the American public that

racism is disappearing. They also ruled that the University of Virginia is required to fund a Christian religious newspaper, breaching one of the most important ideals of the constitution: the separation of church and state. By deciding in these ways, the supreme court and government itself is sending the United States a message: the rights of the individual are starting to lose legal importance.

These two rulings of conservative government are eclipsed, however, by the ramifications of a possible amendment to the constitution that would criminalize the burning of the flag. This amendment, which has already passed through the house, is the ultimate violation of American human rights, not solely because of the fact that an everyday Joe can no longer take a match to the rag on his flagpole, but because of the message it sends.

In the United States we have based social philosophy on the premise of free expression. We believe that if we decide that something that the government does is wrong, then we can freely protest that decision or action as long as we don't encroach upon the civil liberties of another person. It is taken for granted that the Tianamen Square incident will not be mimicked in the United States.

Therefore, by not allowing the citizens of the United States the right to burn the flag of the United States, a basic civil liberty will be stolen from the American public. In this action, government is saying that we can't challenge thought, questioning is no longer important. The flag as material can be desecrated, the flag as an ideal can only be questioned, not destroyed.

If the legislators of this land continue, they will give the citizens that give them power an impression of distrust.

The citizens will feel that government has a lack of faith in them. In order to regain faith, the government quite possibly could commit a rash string of military maneuvers in such countries as Bosnia and Rwanda to regain support. It has happened before: Nicaragua, Panama, Kuwait, Lebanon, and these maneuvers could disrupt world peace.

Little things can have great consequences. The ramifications of outlawing flag burning are so much greater than the simple removal of a right. Once rights start to be taken away we are going back in time to an era of no rights. And once so many rights are taken away, a revolution will take place. And then it will truly be recognized that we just didn't study history long enough.

## Institute teaches how to be a family

by Tamekia White  
Register staff

"The Freedom Forum got 15 of the biggest smart asses in America together and sent them on a trip for three weeks," typed one Rainbow Institute member on everyone's e-mail during one of the morning sessions.

"We are family," said Professor Chuck Stone to everyone.

Invariably, everyone agreed with both statements.

When I initially learned of the Freedom Forum Rainbow Institute program, I was extremely excited about the new people that I would be able to meet from all around the country. A moment later I stepped back and realized that I would be spending three weeks with people just like myself. Stubborn, intelligent, unyielding, and opinionated. The first day there I found out that my predictions had been true.

Although we were initially polite and interested in each other we all knew that eventually we would have things to say on certain topics and that we weren't all going to agree on the same issues. I know that this is true with anyone of different backgrounds and experiences, but our distinction is that we weren't four or five people. We were a group of fifteen. We were a family.

As the days wore on, we found that we did agree and disagree on certain subjects and that some of us get along with each other better than others. Many became annoyed

and frustrated with each other while some formed long lasting friendships.

For example, during a trip from lunch one afternoon two students got into a heated debate over why African-Americans perm their hair. When the institute attended the barbecue hosted by Dean Cole and his wife, one of our members pulled a photograph of a fetus out of his wallet to prove his stance on the issue of abortion.

I'm sure the friendships that were made between Mallory and Serena,

Liz and Apu, and Patti and Amina will never be forgotten.

Points are proven, comments are made, and arguments occur. Don't they in any family?

Even though the board chose 15 of the biggest smart asses in America to become a family within a three week time period, we did. Like most families not everyone will get along with everyone else but in the end you all know that deep down inside you all really have come to love one another and that you are truly a family.

## Teen wants to mix media

by Ebony Reed  
Register staff

Some say there is a thin line between love and hate. For me there is a thin line between print and broadcast journalism.

George F. Will has done it, so why can't I?

Will writes daily for *Newsweek* and also appears on "This Week with David Brinkley." He is doing exactly what I am doing and plan to do for years to come: combining print and broadcast.

"Ebony, I know you want a dual career, but it just isn't possible," said an associate of the Freedom Forum.

"You can switch over, but you can't do both because newspapers won't respect your broadcasting aspirations and broadcasters won't respect your dream to

write."

Since August 1994 I have been hosting and producing "Teen Talk with Ebony."

Through this I've found something I really love to do.

When the cameras aren't rolling, I'm usually writing columns for *The Eccentric* and free-lancing for *The Detroit News*.

Has The Freedom Forum's Rainbow Institute helped me pick between the two? Not exactly. The program has shown me how much I love to write and at the same time how much I miss the lights, camera and action in my life.

Chuck Stone says, "Few are good enough to do both with equal proficiency."

I say, "Look at me, world. I'm doing it now, and I will be for a long time to come."

## Breaking out of racism

by Serena K. Custis  
Register staff

Intelligence, determination, talent, and creativity. These are qualities I possess as a human being. But few people recognize that because they refuse to see me as more than a "black girl".

Although black women have come far, our images have been tainted by the stereotype that all black women are neck-rollin', foul-mouthed, nappy-headed, ash-footed, unproductive members of society.

Aside from racism itself, the most damaging contribution to it is inaccuracy and one-sided points of view. In other words, stereotypes. To someone who has never met a black person, the only reality that even exists is the image portrayed on television. If the only images of black people you see are those of criminals, drug lords, and prostitutes, it is easy for ignorant people to believe that all black people are that way.

Many people are not as fortunate as me. I have traveled more places and met so many different people that I don't have to rely on television to give me accurate images of people.

I really thought that flat-out blatant racism was a thing of the past. But reality slapped me in the face and made me aware of my ignorance.

Recently, I was told by someone that I was "pretty, for a black girl". I took that as a statement saying that black that most black women are ugly. She went on to explain that where she is from, it is rare to see a black female who wasn't "rude or trashy".

Two friends and I went to a research library to look up financial aid for college. A white male college student was sitting at the table where

me and one of my friends sat down. Before a smile or a "hello", he said "You're lucky you're not a white male. There's no scholarships for us."

Although his statement was somewhat true, it was unnecessary inappropriate to say to a total stranger. I brushed off the comment but he kept adding things like "Here's one for you. The Michael Jackson Scholarship".

That was not even the worst of our visit. An older white woman who worked at the library entered the room with a horrified look on her face. She said "Oh, there's people in here." She immediately went to my friend on the computer, who was a black male, and told him to get off the computer because people weren't supposed to print things after 4 p.m. That would've been fine, but the library didn't close until 5 and it was only 4:10. It doesn't take that long to print something.

Soon after the computer incident a white family, which consisted of a mother, father, a teenage girl and her little sister, came into the library. The elderly lady welcomed them enthusiastically and asked them how she could help them. The librarian took the books off the shelf and helped them look up scholarships for their daughter, all without being asked. You would think that she would want to help the students who had no one with them, not the girl whose parents were sitting right there doing all the work.

I am tired of being judged before I open my mouth. I am tired of being seen as "pretty for a black girl". I am tired of having to work harder than everyone else to receive the same respect, just because I was blessed with brown skin. It is time to open our eyes and take people for who they really are. Color over character is getting old.

## Dorm life means adjusting

By Patricia Yeh  
Register staff

I used to hate dorms. I'm still not fond of dorms. Those recycled mattresses, yellow-stained sheets and "creative" cafeteria food scare me. I'm so spoiled that the very idea of sharing my bath tub with other people bothers me. However, my opinion has improved greatly since I came to Granville Towers for the Freedom Forum Rainbow Institute.

In defense of my viewpoint, I'd like to point out that many dorms are... well, lacking. Just imagine my shock when I entered my room. I thought I had died and gone to dorm heaven.

Before my astonished eyes were large writing tables, clean shelves and spacious bureaus. I can't even describe the beds because I get so choked up when I see the white sheets and plump pillow. Heck, even the bathroom with the single shower and toilet is decent. My one complaint with my room is the bed blanket. It looked as if it was sacrificed to a room of hungry moths who feasted on it after fasting for

three months.

Like the rooms, the food in the Granville Towers cafeteria is satisfactory. Even though it's not mother's cooking, it's edible. But a week or two of eating the runny pasta and bland veggies can really make a person want to make a run for the border.

Of course, there are days when I wish for my big bed. I long for my bathroom where I can throw my personal belongings on the shower rods and leave a mess in the sink without worrying about "what would my roommate think."

Most importantly, I want my large television. I miss it's friendly blank screen and cheerful "buzz" when I turn it on. I miss being able to watch my shows instead of watching shows I've sworn I'd never watch because other people are viewing the program.

Aside from the decrepit blanket, boring food, leaky shower and television privileges, I think I'm getting to tolerate dorm life. On second thought... maybe I'm not as strong as I had thought. I thought I could handle it for three weeks. I was wrong. I'm still not fond of dorms.

## RAINBOW REGISTER STAFF

News: Mallory S.E. Floyd, Bill Reiter, Virginia Lam.  
Features: Jennifer Zeis, Elizabeth Dorr, Patricia Yeh.  
Profiles: Amina Akhtar, Nathan Postell.  
Entertainment: Serena Custis, Tamekia White.  
Editorial Page: Ubong Silas, Apu Chakraborty,

Jacqueline Mann, Maria Montoya.  
Columns: Ebony Reed.  
Photos: Will Owens, Serena Custis.  
Publisher: Jan Elliott.  
Editor: Chuck Stone.  
Page Design Consultant: Flora Garcia.  
Production Coordinator: Stacy Wynn.

Colophon: The Rainbow Register is a production of the students who attended the 1995 Freedom Forum Rainbow Institute journalism program at the UNC-CH School of Journalism and Mass Communication. Special thanks go to the staff of The Daily Tar Heel for assistance in producing the paper. This issue of The Rainbow Register is dedicated to Institute Father David Hawpe, executive editor of the *Courier-Journal*, who couldn't be with us this year. We missed him.