

## The Daily Tar Heel

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## BOARD EDITORIALS

## Listening Is Important to Speakout

■ With the shock of Phi Gamma Delta's rush letter fading from the University psyche, today's speakout is the perfect opportunity to begin preventive maintenance — but only if it's done right.

The initial fervor over Phi Gamma Delta's much-ballyhooed rush letter is beginning to subside. The University is no longer in shock over its existence and is entering the most important stage of learning why it existed, what it means and what should be done to ensure that this kind of "humor" ceases to be taken as a joke.

Today's forum to discuss the attitude of the letter is an important first step in promoting dialogue that is needed to resolve the situation, but only if it is done right.

When members of the University community gather at 3:30 p.m. in 100 Hamilton Hall, they should be prepared to listen and not just lash out against Phi Gam, the Greek system or a misogynist society. Explanation, apology and acceptance need to be as much a part of the discussion as outrage.

However, dialogue cannot exist without more than one side of the story presenting its point of view.

This is the perfect chance for members of Phi Gam to explain their point of view instead of just

hurling obscenities at protesters from the fortress of their house, as they did Tuesday night.

This is also the perfect chance for people who oppose the implications of the letter to show that expecting women to be treated as human beings is not a radical goal.

It is the chance for fraternity members to explain why they elected one of the letter's authors to a leadership position on the Interfraternity Council and a chance for members of Pi Beta Phi sorority to explain why they brought Phi Gam brothers wine and flowers to express their sympathy.

But most importantly, it is time for everyone to realize this is an issue which does not pit Greeks against non-Greeks, but one that pits opponents of sexist behavior against those people who condone it.

Blame and punishment are not as important as a simple but firm understanding that this letter, taken even as casual remarks, promotes an atmosphere of sexual violence that can no longer be tolerated.

## High Turnout and High Confusion

When 1,500 students showed up to vote on Tuesday they were presented with a poorly written ballot. The first referendum, asking for the striking or replacing of a title in the student code, was so confusing that even the members of the elections board had difficulty explaining it. Clusters of students were gathered together at pollsites trying to help each other understand what exactly they were supposed to vote for or against.

The original proposals for all of the referenda which went straight from congress to Annie Stuart, elections board chairwoman, were less confusing, but did not give students the background knowledge they needed to vote on the referendum.

The other referenda, including the U-bus fee and the STV allocation of fees, were just as confusing. All of a sudden a mysterious trans-

portation fee appeared on the ballot, and many students had no idea what that was or why they should vote for it. If student groups are going to ask the student body for money, they need to be more clear in the future and not pass the blame on to someone else if the ballot is misleading.

The blame for this ballot debacle was passed from the executive branch to the Elections Board and then to the Student Congress. No one knows what happened to any of the proposals on the way from one branch of student government to another. In the future these student groups need to get their act together so that it doesn't appear as if they are trying to hoodwink students. Democracy relies on an understanding of the issues, and when those issues are presented in an unclear manner, democracy becomes less self-governance and more second guessing.

## Surf the 'Net, Fill Out the Survey

There was an unfortunate time when women, like children, were meant to be seen and not heard. No longer.

The Chancellor's Task Force on Women is sponsoring a computer survey to gauge UNC's atmosphere toward women. This survey can be accessed at any computer connected to the world wide web and should be completed by all of UNC's faculty and students.

Participation does take little effort. Go to any computer lab, and look for the bright pink papers on how to access the survey. It can be done through your e-mail account, Netscape or any connection to the world wide web at: <http://www.unc.edu/staff/survey>.

The survey has 20 multiple-choice questions and a space for additional comments. It takes only a few minutes to complete, yet it will provide a wealth of information to build upon.

The survey was not designed only for women or even for one type of woman, the stereotypical feminist. Everyone's opinions are integral to discovering exactly how women fare at UNC. People will have different views depending on their situation, and for a survey such as this one only to contain one particular type of view will

skew the results.

If you are a woman, complete this survey and educate the University about your needs, so that it will better be able to meet your needs and those of the women who follow.

If you are a man, take the survey to show the male perspective, and keep in mind that this survey can affect your women friends, your sisters, your mothers and even possibly your daughters.

This survey is important and will be on-line until Nov. 22, so you still have a week to make it through the waiting lines in computer labs before Thanksgiving Break.

Every person on campus — whether woman or man, faculty member or student, feminist or not — must participate in this survey to provide the University with as accurate a picture of women's issues as possible.

## BAROMETER

This is a news flash! Thanksgiving 1995 has been canceled under the assumption that all the turkeys will be in Washington, still trying to work out a budget deal.

## With AIDS, Healing Only Began With Sharing

Editor's note: The following column is the second installment of a three-part series that will culminate on Nov. 30 — one day before World AIDS Day.

If there was a good place to find out about my HIV status, Provincetown, Mass., was it. Although the tourism office likes to tout Provincetown as a Portuguese fishing village and as the first landing site of the Pilgrims (that's right ... it wasn't Plymouth Rock), the town is now a haven for artists and other creative types. And — as is so often the case — where the artists go, the gay folk soon follow. Or am I being redundant?

Like a Key West of the North, Provincetown is now no more a Portuguese fishing village than is Las Vegas. It's a thriving gay resort, a small town where it is acceptable for gay couples to walk hand-in-hand down Commercial Street. Although most of you may take holding hands in public for granted, for us gay folk, it's the most liberating feeling in the world. That's what makes Provincetown unique — it's more wide open than the Castro.

But like the inner cities, where gay folk form mini-ghettos to find strength and safety in numbers, Provincetown has been hit hard by the AIDS virus. Even before I found out about my HIV status, I had watched friends die in that little town. I also knew of several HIV positive folks living there, including my roommate. So, when I found out I was HIV positive, there was a natural support system already in place. That's why I dreaded going back to Chapel Hill.

For three months, I had lived in the gay version of Disney World. But once August rolled around, it was time for me to return to Helms country — the gay version of Hell. Don't get me wrong, Chapel Hill isn't like the rest of state. There is a tight-knit gay community here, and I knew that once I returned, I wouldn't face my struggle alone. But Chapel Hill is no Provincetown, and I secretly wondered how I would hold up without the expansive support

system I had grown accustomed to in that little resort.

Times were tough when I returned. I suffered in relative silence for several months, sharing the news about my HIV status with only one or two people. And although they tried to be understanding, even my gay friends down here didn't know how to treat the information. Most folks who die from AIDS in the South do so quietly. Too often, they slip away in silent shame, so that even the gay community doesn't know where they've gone. Their obituaries share in the subterfuge, "He passed away after struggling with cancer ... pneumonia ... a long illness." For most of my friends, I was the first person they knew with HIV.

As my spirits fell, so did my grades. Law school is a very competitive environment, where any form of weakness can result in a quick decline. And as the semester drew to a close, it became more and more difficult for me to escape confronting the virus that consumed me. The first exam I took that December was in Trusts & Estates. The first question on the exam dealt with a gay man's inheritance difficulties after his life partner died from AIDS. I stared at the question for what must have been an hour before I struggled through it and the rest of the exam. It was the lowest grade I have ever received.

I went home for Christmas determined to keep a smile on my face. I had yet to tell my family about my status, and I wanted this to be our last holiday together without the pall of HIV hanging over our heads. But as we sat together, holding candles at a Christmas Eve service, I wasn't able to sing the words of "Silent Night"

with the rest of the congregation. I knew that my trembling voice would have betrayed the fact that something was wrong. And the next day, as we tore open presents in the front of the fire, I made sure my parents got at least a few pictures of me. I didn't know how many more Christmases we would have together.

I had wanted to be strong for my parents when I told them. I knew they would need a shoulder to cry on, and I wanted mine to be steady. I also wanted them to know that I was doing all I could to fight the virus, seeing a doctor regularly and taking care of myself. So I had waited six months before I felt the time was right. I knew that once I returned to Chapel Hill in January, I would be entering the hospital for two weeks to begin an experimental drug treatment program — and I knew it would be too difficult to conceal this from my family. After spending two hours with my minister, struggling to determine the best way to tell my parents that they might very well outlive me, I laid the groundwork for the next day.

When my parents left for choir practice the next day, I built a fire in the den. Sitting there with a friend, I agonized over what was about to occur. At my church — half-way across town — my parents were sitting in a room with my minister, learning that their son had HIV. I had decided with my minister that, although I couldn't deliver the punch, I could be there to pick up the pieces. I couldn't watch their faces as they first learned about my condition, but I could be there to hug them after they got home.

I sent my friend away and waited alone downstairs for the first sounds of my parents' arrival. The front door opened and closed, and soft footsteps fell upon the stairs. At the first sight of me, the strength I thought I had quickly left me, and I rushed for the embrace of my parent's arms. We had a lot of healing to do.

Doug Ferguson is a third-year student in the School of Law.



DOUG FERGUSON  
NO EXCUSES,  
NO REGRETS



## Myths, Medicine and Marijuana Misconceptions

Friday has been dedicated by UNC's chapter of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws and Duke's chapter of the Cannabis Action Network as Medical Marijuana Day, devoted to truth, justice and public enlightenment of the medical uses of marijuana. CAN's traveling hemp museum should be unfolding in the Pit by mid-morning, placed there for the education and enjoyment of the student body and providing for us a forum from which to dispel the controversy and speak the truth about the medical uses of the drug.

That evening, at 7 p.m. in 106 Carroll Hall, gospel will be spread through the medium of rock and roll as local bands unite to raise money for NORML, to continue the fight for legalization. Tickets will be sold in the Pit until Friday afternoon; all are encouraged to come to both events ... because if you do, you might learn a few things. In important decisions such as these (To Smoke, Or Not To Smoke, in this case), knowing the facts about both sides of the issue is always desirable, because then one can rest a little easier, knowing they can make a more informed decision than before. And that's what becoming an adult is all about, right? Making informed decisions?

And yet in this case, it's a sad fact that the majority of Americans don't generally make informed decisions when the question of TSNTS arises — and I am thinking not so much of the people who smoke it for the wrong reasons, but rather the ones who don't, also for the wrong reasons. Much of today's public opposition to marijuana can be traced to governmental attempts (dating back to the 1930s, before Prohibition began) to distort and demonize the drug as a powerful hallucinogen, creating a public hysteria that allowed certain high officials to force their own morality play (the 1937 Marijuana Tax Act) on this country.

Besides outlawing one of the most useful plants found in nature, a consequence of the law was the free reign given to the government to control the majority of drug information publicly released. A population thus controlled is a population that doesn't ask questions. With a deluge of government reports vilifying the drug, calling for tougher penalties for dealers, it isn't surprising that many Americans never think to question the lies and distortions they've held as gospel all their lives. And sometimes it takes an event like a Medical Marijuana Day to get people out of that mental shell and into really thinking for a change; those of you who didn't read the last column I wrote for the DTH (which would be just about all of you, since the DTH never ran it) may never have considered that there may be human rights involved.

If you can, put aside for a moment that marijuana is less harmful to the body than nicotine or alcohol, that not one person has ever died from an overdose, that scientific theories exist that a moderate amount of drug use can, in fact, be good for the body. Put aside your prejudices and think. Are you really going to let big government say what you can and can't put into your body? Aren't you responsible enough to decide for yourself?

I have broached the subject with many souls on campus. Have seen the shock on the faces when I mentioned the "M-word." Watched the eyes carefully avoiding mine as they pondered this question. A popular response seems to be a general feeling of, "these laws exist for a reason. They wouldn't have become law if they didn't have the people's interests at heart." This line of reasoning seems to ride on the notion that all laws are, by definition, noble and just. Right. Everyone in this town who had to witness the Williamson verdict last week knows this isn't true.

When the values of a society become so distorted that letting a killer walk by pleading temporary insanity is viewed as law and order, while use of a mildly intoxicating herb is considered immoral, then it is the existence of these values which becomes the real crime. The people who pass these laws are generally unaware of both marijuana's medicinal uses and the smoking habits of your average pot smoker. But if there's one thing I've learned in my association with NORML, it is that no drug, not even marijuana, is evil. All kinds of people smoke it, and they are not dangerous, drug-crazed outlaws out to steal your children, but ordinary people like you and me.

According to the latest DTH poll, 52 percent of UNC students have smoked marijuana before, and that's just the ones who had the courage to admit it. Reality: it's probably a lot higher (no pun intended). See you on Friday, everyone.

Reginald "R.J." Beatty is a junior American studies major from Lexington, N.C.

## Arab Display Has No Place In UNC Human Rights Week

TO THE EDITOR:

On behalf of the Campus Y, I would like to apologize to the UNC community for the inclusion of the Arab display in our Human Rights Week events. This program was not approved by the Campus Y leadership and is uncharacteristic of our typical programming.

The Campus Y strives to educate the campus about social injustices committed throughout the world in a fair, thoughtful manner. We have always encouraged dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian supporters in forums that present all sides of the complicated relations in the Middle East.

In light of the recent peace talks and the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin, this exhibit is especially troubling to us. We feel the exhibit is biased and outdated. Again, I apologize for this oversight.

Emily Roth  
CAMPUS Y CO-PRESIDENT



## READERS' FORUM

## Israeli Torture Law Violates Human Rights, Stops Peace

TO THE EDITOR:

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADAC) has an exhibit in the Student Union for Human Rights Week. This display is an expression of Israeli violations in the West Bank from the past to the present. Amnesty International condemned on Oct. 22, 1995, a bill which could legalize torture in Israel and the West Bank, saying that it is an "outrage which violates Israel's treaty obligations."

The "Prohibition on Torture" amendment to

Article 227 of the Israeli Penal Law says that any public servant who tortures or authorizes the torture of another person is liable for 10 to 20 years in jail. Yet this bill defines torture as "severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, except for pain or suffering inherent in interrogation procedures or punishment according to law." Article 2 of the United Nations Convention against Torture states that "no exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether ... internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as justification of torture." With the peace talks we thought these human rights violations would cease. Unfortunately, they still exist.

Tina Dahir  
JUNIOR  
JOURNALISM

## Time Keeps On Ticking ...

That's right, the Nov. 21 deadline for columnist applications is approaching. Pick up your application in the DTH office by Friday.

