

The Daily Tar Heel

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Hooked on cleanup

When Chancellor Michael Hooker and Student Body President Aaron Nelson made the decision to cancel classes unilaterally for a "day of action" on Wednesday afternoon, they overlooked the message they were sending: the appearance of the campus is more important than the value of education — a value students know is marked by thousands of tuition dollars that pay for professors and classes.

While everybody laments the wreckage littering our campus, was the most effective way to clean it up to cancel classes, cross fingers and hope that 10,000 students with nothing else to do on a damp afternoon would pitch in and help? Of course not.

The desire to promote community spirit is always welcome, but not at the expense of class time. Few students attend classes solidly from noon to 7 p.m. on Wednesdays. If students wanted to aid in the cleanup, they could have selected an hour or two out of their own schedules rather than have the University carve it out of their class time. Campus organizations, as well, could have taken a hint from fraternities and sororities and helped out in the name of community service, not to mention service hours.

Hooker's rash executive decision has met with criticism from faculty and students. In his typically abrupt fashion, did not even bother to

contact the Chairwoman of the Faculty Council to gauge possible reactions. These bold actions, necessary in a state of emergency, came two days too late.

Many classes were held despite the cancellation. The dilemma puts pressure on students and faculty alike. A semester's worth of material must be covered, one way or another.

If it really was necessary to cancel classes to clean up the campus, they ought to have been canceled on Monday, when Chapel Hill was still in a state of emergency. Chapel Hill Mayor Rosemary Waldorf had asked people to stay off the roads, and out of the repair crews' way. Thousands of staff and students lacked electricity and clean water, and the University's water was undrinkable. Gov. Jim Hunt even asked nonessential state employees to stay home on Monday and help clean up their communities.

Though the thinking behind canceling yesterday's afternoon classes was confined and misguided, we cannot overlook the fact that droves of students, as well as the chancellor, took advantage of the opportunity for lending a hand. Yesterday will be remembered as a day in which "action," though beneficial, overtook the University's mission to educate, and faculty were dealt a hand without having a say in the rules of the game.

Warning signs

While the Coalition for Economic Justice gained campuswide attention with colorful posters equating privatization to racism, they might have overlooked the possibility that such a move could harm their cause in the long run.

One of the posters reveals, in boldface, a tasteless quote by Don Follmer, former press secretary for N.C. House Speaker Harold Brubaker. The other poster accuses Chancellor Michael Hooker and the Outsourcing Steering Committee Chairman Bruce Runberg of covering up privatization information.

According to coalition member Robin Ellis, the red and yellow fliers were intended to draw attention to two things: the University's consideration of privatizing campus services, namely housekeeping, and the Sept. 23 lawsuit charging the University with discrimination against UNC housekeepers.

Rather than calling separate attention to the two issues, the coalition overlapped them, making it appear that racial discrimination and privatization are one and the same. By calling the privatization investigation a racist act, the coalition sets the stage for legitimizing housekeepers' discrimination claims.

Because racism is a sensitive issue, it deserves discretion in accusations of groups or organizations. Abusing the term only minimizes its seriousness, turning it into a common phrase for whenever ethnic groups disagree. As a result, groups who actually do experience racism have a harder time proving it, even when it blatantly exists.

According to coalition members, their efforts at effective communication with administrators have been frustrated, leaving them little choice but to use the issue of racism to get attention. If that is the case, the idea of the eye-catching fliers was a smooth move. Grassroots movements are historically rooted in recruiting support by giving the issue an emotional, spirited frame.

Ideally, all discussion on issues as important as these would take place in a responsible, respectful and credible manner. Unfortunately circumstances seem to have necessitated the new, more aggressive, measures of the coalition. As coalition leaders practice their right to free speech and pursue their goals, hopefully they will not suffer too great a setback for having directly linked racism to privatization, and clouded up what is already a foggy issue.



Saddam attempts to stir opposition to the US, by performing the much-hated American dance craze, known as "The Macarena".

Looking back through the kaleidoscope of life

An old friend of mine turns 21 this week. Unfortunately, she's not at UNC for me to celebrate with. She transferred two years ago, just wasn't happy here. I never thought it was my fault she left, but sometimes I think it's my fault she didn't stay, meaning I should have made things better somehow.

As I was thinking about her birthday, I realized something I've been longing to address for five long years now. Way back then, this birthday girl co-wrote a play for our youth group's state convention. The convention's theme was the "Kaleidoscope of Life." The play was part of the talent show finale. I was cast as the lead.

The play portrayed a teenager contemplating suicide. It was about rejection and pressure, about being turned down by girls, being cut by the baseball team, being overlooked by parents. As the drama climaxed, I moved to the stage's front edge, which for our purposes was a steep cliff. I stood silently, the lights dimmed, and my character's best friend appeared in the shadows, representing the thoughts moving through my mind.

As I stared over the audience's heads below, my character's best friend recounted childhood joys. "When we were young, the world was like a kaleidoscope," she said. "It was our kaleidoscope, not the kids' at school, not the baseball team's. It was bright and wonderful and belonged only to you and me."

I remember seeing tears sneaking out of someone's eyes in the front row as she said this. But with the next line, things fell apart. "We turned that kaleidoscope, not them."

In what should have been a dramatic pause, a faceless voice rose from the back of the auditorium. "She turned his kaleidoscope," the voice rang out slowly, like Beavis or Butthead or something worse. Suddenly, the

pins-and-needles tension in the air shifted to roaring laughter.

Every line that followed became a victim of sexual innuendo. The message was lost. The plot fell off a cliff. As the play came to a close, I was supposed to freeze and let the lights fade out on me. That's what I should have done. But I panicked. I fell onto the laughing side of the fence, and I melodramatically jumped off the stage's edge. Oh well, I thought. I didn't realize that the rest of my youth group was backstage in tears. Many, in fact, would cry for several hours. For them, this play meant infinitely more than just a crappy exhibition of my below-par acting abilities.

What I seemed to have forgotten — and what the audience never knew — was that the play was inspired by actual pain and loss. Months before, a 14-year-old boy died in his garage at the back of our neighborhood. After being caught joyriding with friends, this boy got a piece of rope, looped it over the frame of his automatic garage door and tied a noose. He stood in a folding lawn chair and put the rope around his neck. The chair broke, leaving his body hanging in midair.

He was still alive when his mother found him, but never regained consciousness. Many believe he only wanted to scare his parents because of the trouble he faced, that he died accidentally.

The painful reality is that we'll never know for sure. Everyone was shocked when the news spread through the halls at school. I



RICHARD RAY
HOBSON'S CHOICE

remember feeling completely nauseous. Extra guidance counselors were shipped in for the week. The school emptied — on the day of his funeral. We all dressed up and crammed into the church. We rode in a long dark parade to the cemetery.

I wanted desperately to believe it was an accident. I still do. But even so, the event grabbed me by the throat and forced me to think about suicide. We were all so naive then. Why not just run away, start somewhere new, I thought? I couldn't see that people sometimes get tired, tired of just living at all. Many who think about suicide don't feel the energy to start again, not by themselves.

Occasionally I go back in time, reliving moments the way they should have gone. When I go back to that convention, I stand firm on the stage. I stay until the audience grows silent and I take the microphone. Then I tell them about our friend, our neighbor, our classmate — dead at age 14. I tell 'em the room is probably full of people who think dying is easier than living. And I tell them that our junior high yearbook has a photo of our dead friend in his football uniform. He will always be 14 years old.

It's part of human nature to move past tragedy. We think about the bad less and less with time. Life goes on for the living. In the last five years, we've all grown tremendously. This year's freshmen are already acclimated to this lifestyle we call college. But our old friend is still 14 years old. That's not the way it should have been. This year, he'd have been a freshman, too. He'd likely be here with you and me.

To my former neighbor, housemate and basketball partner, happy 21st birthday, Shannon.

Richard Ray is a senior journalism and creative writing major from Greenville, N.C.

BAROMETER

Friends in need

Special thanks to The Durham Herald-Sun for printing The Daily Tar Heel last week when our printer lost power due to Fran's fury.

Service winner

Despite widespread concerns and heated debate, students, faculty and staff teamed up to clean up our campus yesterday. Now there's only one problem left to solve: which Greek organization is going to make the T-shirts?

¡Dios mio!

By banning the Macarena from physical education classes, Wake County schools have disrupted a veritable social phenomenon. Thank goodness they've still got dodgeball.

Firing range

Despite so-called U.S. deterrents, Iraq military forces have felt free to fire upon U.S. warplanes. Fortunately, their aim is about as clear as President Clinton's policy.

Public service vs. classroom: Hooker's difficult decision

TO THE EDITOR:

When I first heard Student Body President Aaron Nelson talk about a campuswide action day to help clean up the campus in the aftermath of Hurricane Fran, I knew it was a good thing to do.

Not because it echoes my own message of public service, but because I knew it would give all of us — faculty, students and staff — a chance to come together as a community. In the face of so much destruction and personal hardship, that sense of community is more important now than ever.

We chose Wednesday afternoon for the effort in order to give us enough time to get the word out about the cleanup, yet still get much of the work done this week.

I understand this works hardship on faculty who teach on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, who already have lost a day of teaching to Hurricane Fran.

I regret that the cancellation detracts from our primary mission of education, but I believe that this unique circumstance warrants extraordinary response.

Several faculty felt that we should have encouraged participation in the cleanup, but left the scheduled classes intact. We could have done that, but it would have required faculty and students to make the choice between public service and the classroom.

Both are important, and the latter is primary, but in the incredible aftermath of Hurricane Fran, when examples of public spiritedness abound, I felt canceling classes on Wednesday afternoon and evening was the only way to say clearly, both to faculty and students, "Community and public service truly are important, and we will not force you to choose between the two."

I enjoyed working with those who were able to volunteer yesterday, and I am proud to be chancellor of an institution where faculty, staff and students respond so willingly during a crisis.

Michael Hooker
CHANCELLOR



READERS' FORUM

The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments and criticism. Letters to the editor should be no longer than 400 words and must be typed, double-spaced, dated and signed by no more than two people. Students should include their year, major and phone number. Faculty and staff should include their title, department and phone number. The DTH reserves the right to edit letters for space, clarity and vulgarity. Bring letters to the DTH office at Suite 104, Carolina Union, mail them to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, NC 27515 or e-mail forum to: dth@unc.edu.

Career Exploration Series provides insights, free food

TO THE EDITOR:

The Senior Marshals for the Class of 1997 cordially invite all seniors and other interested students to the Fall Career Exploration Series. Designed to give students who are thinking about their future plans some valuable insights, this series consists of career panels and a casual, relaxed atmosphere.

Featured at Spanky's, the panels have been created to allow students to freely ask questions and develop relationships with other students who may be interested in similar career paths. All of the sessions are on Thursday nights at 7 p.m. at Spanky's. The first panel is on Sept. 12 and will be comprised of graduate students who will share their insights with you on graduate school.

The next one, on Oct. 3, will be a group of professionals in health-related fields, and on Nov. 3 the panel will be made up of business-related professionals. Other panels may be scheduled later in the year, so please look out for further announcements. This is a fun, useful opportunity so come on out and gain some valuable insights on your career while meeting

interesting people and eating some great food for free.

Leena Pendharkar
SENIOR
ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY/ ENGLISH

Column represents misguided sensationalism, moronic logic

TO THE EDITOR:

Whatever respect I had for Richard Harris' opinion vanished with the first paragraph of his latest column ("In matters of capital punishment, kill 'em all," Sept. 10). The problem with the justice system is the type of misguided sensationalism and brutal vindictiveness used by those who would justify state murder of individuals. I found the imagery disgusting, the suggestions deplorable and the argument moronic. Petty revenge is not why the penal system exists. Joining murderers and rapists in the gutter is not society's mission. One wonders what happened to the concepts of rehabilitation and humanity. Harris' disgusting focus on the "spectacle" of murder by the state plays to the same base instincts that the Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan warped to their ends. This entire editorial tramples humanity into the ground.

Would Harris like to be the professional rapist who metes out the punishment to "fit the crime exactly" when someone is convicted of rape? Then, suddenly, he's squeamish about prison rape. Why worry about humane conditions for those who no longer deserve humanity? I do agree with him on one point. Why bother arguing the merits of lethal injection compared to lethal gas? Remember, humane-ness doesn't matter to him. Why not have them summarily shot in the courtroom the instant sentence is passed? There's spectacle for you.

Steven Bousios
SOPHOMORE
JOURNALISM

Still time

The deadline for applications for The Daily Tar Heel editorial board has been extended to Friday at 4 p.m. Direct questions or concerns to Editorial Page Editor Chris Yates at 962-4086.

