

This Year, Fulfill Resolution to Find God

Rationalism or faith: how about both? We are roughly one month into the new millennium. New Year's resolutions have been broken. The year 2000 bug is a distant memory. Writing "00" has become old hat. The new zeal to change our lives that came with the new millennium has been forgotten.

The dawn of the new millennium brought about a resurfacing of spirituality. Television and the popular press had teamed together with spiritual questions. The "Larry King Live" New Year's Eve show featured the Dalai Lama and Billy Graham.

We discovered that we were hungry for a complete religion, an ultimate truth, that gives both logic and faith true shift.

Growing up in Orlando, Fla., I found a very disturbing trend. In my high school, approximately 70 percent of my classmates were atheist or agnostic.

They chose this path because they believe in the very popular ideology that faith is irrational. The notion of religion is seen as divisive, based on blind faith, a personal decision and religion against all that is logical.

During my undergraduate years here, I found another disturbing trend, another extreme. I found many classmates who were religious, but because they were born into it.

Religion was inherited, not chosen.

Also, there was a certain logical rigor applied to all that is outside religion, yet that same logic became irrelevant concerning issues of faith. There was a compartmentalization of life, where reason stood in one corner and religion in the other.

Reason comes about through the com-

plex conversion of chemical signals to electrical stimuli between neurons in a relay system to the Broadman area of the brain. This is truly an intricate system.

Reasoning and logic are blessings from our creator. If this is a gift given to us by our creator, shouldn't we use it?

We should use our God-given gift to its fullest capacity. This means that we are supposed to pursue a university education. We are supposed to apply what we learn. We must learn to question, research and analyze.

Religion is the notion that we believe all to be true from the all-knowing divine. Therefore, for an ultimate truth to exist it needs to agree with science and logic.

Science, after all, was also created by God. True religion needs to be strong enough to withstand scrutiny and prove its divine worth.

Religion is supposed to be rational and make sense to both the heart and the mind. We should question, learn and search for the truth.

Belief without seeing is faith; belief without understanding is blind faith. Blind faith is very dangerous! We shouldn't believe simply because our pastor or imam say so, or mom and dad taught us.

We should believe because both are heart and our mind say so.

Otherwise, this allows us to fall victim to the same mistake of religious cult groups of years past, such as Heaven's Gate. We need to learn

NADIA SIDDIQUI POINT OF VIEW

instance, we don't see protons, positively charged particles that make up the nucleus of an atom.

However, we know that they exist through observing, researching and Rutherford's experiment.

Our faith in protons is substantiated with logical and scientific evidence.

This same sort of rigor must enter into our personal lives and our spiritual choices. This rigor should be applied to the Christian concept of Trinity, the Muslim concept of Tawheed or Monotheism, the Hindu concept of reincarnation and all major religious dogmas.

Central, core concepts of a faith need to make sense; otherwise this hinders our growth in the faith.

More importantly, though, it is an insult to our creator on many different levels. This is because we are saying that the all-knowing can make mistakes and our religious dogma is not in sync with science. The other

from previous mistakes from the last millennium.

Faith is knowing that something really exists and is true. For

insult is to not use our God-given gift to think.

Religion needs to make logical sense, whatever we believe in. There is no such thing as mystery of faith. Faith should not be a mystery, and we should not gain some sense of peace from fudging logic. God does not hide behind curtains, veiled in a shroud of mystery.

This does not mean that we should try to mold an illogical faith into agreeing with science. We would have as much success in doing that like trying to jimmy a square peg into a circle. Rather, we should try to find a faith that naturally meshes with logic and science. Why do we think that we have reached our spiritual destination if we never even embarked on the search or quest to begin with?

We cannot make the assumption that all religions are created equal. Therefore, they are not equally logical, nor equally illogical.

So renew that New Year's resolution and hunger to question and search for the ultimate truth — "the truth is out there."

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Bilingualism Doesn't 'Cater' To Immigrants

COURTNEY GRIFFITHS POINT OF VIEW

Recently, an editorial notebook written by Sophie Milam in The Daily Tar Heel ("¿No Habla Ingles?" Dec. 7) criticized the growing bilingualism in the United States, including Spanish options on automated teller machines, stating that "foreigners should know that when they choose to live in another country, they choose to adopt part of its culture."

While I agree that learning English is critical for future educational and economic success in the United States, I would disagree with the assumption that providing bilingual services is equivalent to "catering to immigrants."

The majority of non-English speaking Latino immigrants I know are trying to learn English. This is especially evident in the high demand for English as a Second Language classes. In our community, ESL classes currently are offered every weeknight and on the weekends. Many of these classes are full and some even have waiting lists.

Too often, I hear people say, "If they live in our country, they should speak our language." It would be ideal if when someone entered the United States, they magically acquired fluency in English. But in truth, learning a language as an adult is very difficult. It takes time. And for many new Spanish-speaking immigrants in our community, it takes a second priority to supporting their families.

As an ESL teacher, I can say that my students are some of the most dedicated individuals that I have ever met. They come to class every week after working 12- and 13-hour days to spend two hours struggling to learn the intricacies of a difficult language that most of us had the opportunity to learn when we were children.

Unfortunately, many native English speakers do not demonstrate patience or understanding when non-native speakers try to communicate using their new skills, only increasing the difficulty of learning English.

Think about your own experiences in foreign language classes at the University. After four semesters of French or Spanish, how competent do you feel in your ability to express yourself in a foreign language? Most of us had the benefit of books, highly

trained instructors, listening labs and, most importantly, ample time to study outside of class.

Significantly, the Spanish-speaking parents I know are strong advocates for their children learning English. They constantly encourage and praise their children's ability to speak English.

The parents recognize the unique opportunity that their children have to be completely bilingual. Some parents even insist that the older children help the younger ones with their English so that they will speak some English when they start school.

But I think focusing only on the desire of Spanish-speakers to learn English misses the point. The Latino community has added many assets to the larger Triangle community. Organizations such as Casa Multicultural, El Centro Hispano, El Pueblo Inc. and the nascent Latino credit union have been founded.

Community events such as La Fiesta del Pueblo have been organized and many have benefited through participation in them. Latino involvement has strengthened many community institutions such as schools and churches.

Moreover, Latinos have contributed greatly to the economy of North Carolina through participation in the work force, being consumers, paying taxes and entrepreneurship.

Spanish-speaking immigrants are members of our community. And as such, they have as much of a right to participate in community activities as do English speakers.

Whether the community activity is worship, organized sports, attending school events or using medical, legal or banking services, providing bilingual and culturally appropriate services does not equate with special access, but equal access.

An individual, regardless of language, should have the ability to communicate with a doctor if they need medical care. And parents, regardless of language, should have the ability to communicate with their children's school.

Even something as trivial as a Spanish option on ATMs provides access to a community service. Partially as a result of distrust of banks, Latinos have been the victims of crime because it has become known that some Latinos may carry large sums of money.

A bilingual ATM can serve as a first step in building trust between the Latino population and banks.

While having a large non-English speaking population is a relatively new phenomenon in North Carolina, it is not a new phenomenon in the United States. Unfortunately, anti-immigrant sentiment and concern about immigrants not speaking English are also not new phenomena.

The population of the United States largely has been formed by waves of both forced and voluntary immigration from around the world. From our history, we should learn that, in time, immigrants do learn English.

And most importantly, we should recognize that while they might be initially seen as challenges, the new cultures, languages and perspectives that immigrant populations bring only serve to strengthen our communities and society as a whole.

A walk through New York City or San Francisco reveals that not only bilingual but multilingual communities can thrive.

In North Carolina, we have the unique opportunity to learn from the experiences of other bilingual and multilingual communities in the United States and thus make our own transition to a multilingual community a smoother one.

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American Freedom: Privilege of the Few

Daily Tar Heel columnist Jonathan Trager is right — understanding history is essential if we are to participate meaningfully in our social and political milieu.

Unfortunately, Trager's grasp of American history is shallow at best and fraught with inaccuracies.

So perhaps I'd better help him out in his declared task of exposing you, the eager student, to profound historical revelation.

Let me begin with two concepts Trager unexplainably omitted from Tuesday's first installation of "the historical tale of American freedom": race and sex.

In one of the most ridiculous statements ever to appear on the back page of the DTH (which is notorious for ridiculous statements), Trager wrote, "This Age of Freedom reached its culmination with ... the Industrial Revolution."

What typical right-wing bullshit. Freedom for whom, exactly?

Why, for white men, the folks who framed the Constitution — which, Trager asserts, gave "individuals" the right to "make the decisions that affect their own lives, provided they do not infringe upon the freedom of others."

Unless, of course, these "others" happened to be black or female — groups that together comprise about 70 percent of the population. Some historical analysis this is.

At the height of the "Industrial Age," a century ago, women could not vote, nor could they prosecute their husbands for rape or physical abuse, except of the most egregious degree.

Black Americans were subject to mob justice, and hundreds of lynchings went unpunished in the South every year. No blacks or women held major political offices. (While



DANIEL BREZENOFF POINT OF VIEW

we're on the subject, neither did Catholics or Jews. Death by child labor was common in dangerous coal mines. And striking workers were regularly suppressed by force in this "Age of Freedom." But that's another column.)

Thanks to feminists and black activists, things have surely improved for these folks, but with the head start white men had, it is tough for others to catch up in a "capitalist" economy, labor being their only bargaining chip.

Violence against women still plagues our society. Being beaten up by a boyfriend or husband is the No. 1 reason American women visit emergency rooms, and rape is the most frequently committed violent crime. Please let those facts sink in. Crazy, huh? If you're not safe, you are not free.

For black folks, struggle and adversity remain the rule as well, and the U.S. Supreme Court, which was briefly a bastion of justice for oppressed classes under Earl Warren, is making matters worse.

In a 5-4 decision 12 days ago, the High Court ruled that citizens who run away from police may be stopped, questioned and frisked if police make a "determination of reasonable suspicion based on common-sense judgments and inferences about human behavior."

Is this some kind of a joke?

The right-wingers on the court are either extremely naive or quite cynical. New York University law Professor Barry Friedman, quoted in The New York Times, said the decision is a "troubling indication of the court's obliviousness to what's really going on in the country." Got that right, Barry.

It would be wonderful if police could always be counted on to make "common-

sense judgments," and be trusted to act humanely and lawfully.

Unfortunately, as the recent indictments of four more Los Angeles police officers demonstrate, reckless, malevolent and dangerous men frequently don the noble blue.

For a young black man in a major city, the sight of approaching cops often invokes a very valid fear. It's called survival instinct. Stick around and one wrong move, or a black cell phone in your hand ("It sure looked like a gun...") could mean death.

Run away, and you might get shot in the back — but then, you might escape.

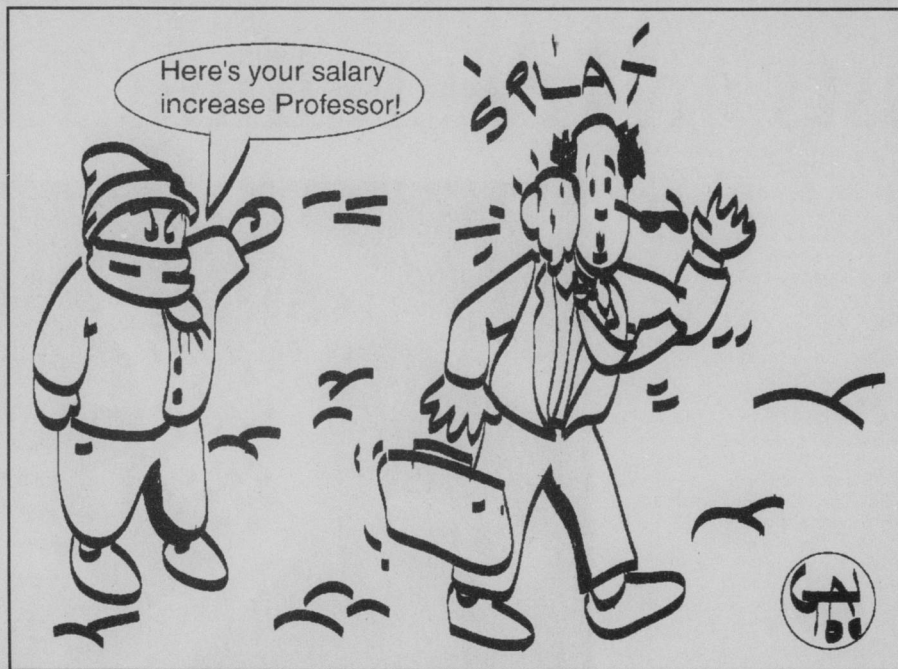
Amadou Diallou was fumbling for his keys in the doorway of his New York City apartment when he was shot dead by police. Forty-one shots were fired; 19 hit Diallou. Yet he had done nothing wrong and was wanted for no crime.

One of the officers fell down, the others thought he had been shot — though no shot had been fired — and the melee began.

Had Diallou run and gotten away he would be alive. Thus the prudent course of action for a young black man confronted by police could be flight.

Chief Justice William Rehnquist admitted a "risk that officers may stop innocent people." Being stopped briefly by police is a minor inconvenience. But for people of color such encounters can be deadly.

Justice John Paul Stevens, dissenting, wrote, "Among some citizens, particularly minorities ... there is ... the possibility that the fleeing person is ... innocent, but ... believes that contact with the police can



UNC, Duke Students Want Your Blood

Student Groups From the 2 Schools Face Off for Blood Donations Through Feb. 23

Hey Dook:

Your friends over at Carolina, knowing that we're going to sweep you in basketball this year, would like to offer you the opportunity to redeem yourselves through the "Rivals Fight for Life" competition.

This competition, which will run today through the final Carolina-University of New Jersey at Durham (Oops! We meant to say Duke!) game on March 4, pits our two schools in an effort to collect the most blood for the American Red Cross.

Our hope is to put the bad blood that exists between our two schools to good use. However, we want to remind you that you are responsible for giving blood — you can't have your butlers donate for you!

In addition, there is a minimum weight to give blood, so we have to remind you that all those freshmen on

your basketball team will be ineligible!

Because we feel certain that Carolina Blue Heaven will triumph over the Dook Blue Devils, we are allowing you to donate blood at the Red Cross donation site at Duke South twice weekly as well as at regular campus blood drives.

It is our sincere hope that Duke does not "trip up" in this endeavor, as you have been known to do before.

But either way, we are ready to win twice in Cameron Indoor Stadium this year!

Sincerely,
UNC chapter of Alpha Phi Omega,
Carolina Athletic Association,
UNC Residence Hall Association
and the executive branch
of UNC student government

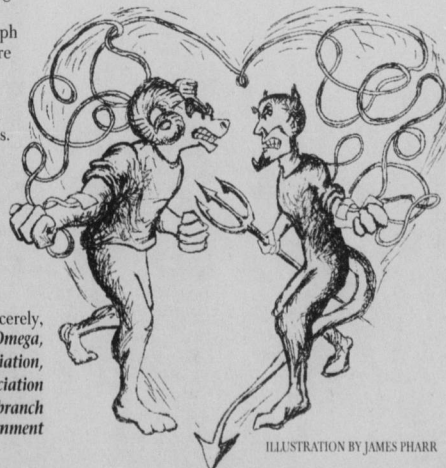


ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES PHARR

Hey Carolina:

We've beaten and embarrassed you in the past, but this time we're going for blood. The American Red Cross Club of Duke University officially challenges the students of UNC to an all out battle for life.

On March 4, during the halftime of the men's Duke-UNC basketball game, a new champion will be announced. The student body who donates the most blood will be awarded a trophy from the American Red Cross. Frankly, we look forward to winning twice that day. We're going to give the gift of life, will you?

Sincerely,
Duke University Red Cross Club

For more information, e-mail Lindsey Ligett, student government Webmaster, at lligett@email.unc.edu.