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# The Daily Tar Heel

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## BOARD EDITORIALS

# Gagged

Whoever took down fliers in the Pit slamming student government violated students' rights to criticize their leaders.

No one knows who hung the neon-yellow "Rage Against the Machine" posters around the Pit on Sunday morning. No one knows who took them down, either.

Whoever took the fliers down obviously had a problem with their message. But the real problem lies in how they handled their anger - by robbing students of their First Amendment rights.

The fliers accused student government of being a "well-oiled transparent machine." They went on to say that the people of the machine "recognize that they're part of a winning system, and they're willing to do anything to stay on top, frequently at the expense of students' interests."

Now that is some harsh criticism. It obviously upset student government officials. But what's so wrong with that? In America, are we not free to criticize the government?

Oh, wait a second... that's in the land of the free - not a perfect world of residence halls with lousy fire alarms and a basketball arena that relegates students to the rafters.

But UNC does have rules that protect censorship. The Chancellor's Facilities Use Policy prohibits the posting of fliers on buildings, walls and lampposts around campus.

That in itself is wrong. Besides, no one

heeds the rule, as dozens of posters on lampposts on campus every day advertise everything from blood drives to fraternity parties.

By removing the fliers almost as soon as they went up, somebody blatantly denied the mysterious student's First Amendment freedoms of speech and expression.

Not everyone would agree that student government members are such power-hungry, conniving monsters, but at least one person out there believes they are. And whoever posted the fliers did bring up a lot of good points - or at least points that should have been taken into consideration while voting in this year's student elections.

Whether you like the message this mystery person posted is irrelevant. With such a large and diverse student body, someone is always going to feel quite differently than you about any number of issues.

People are different and each individual has the right to believe in whatever he or she chooses. No one has the right to regulate what students can and cannot say.

Student government members might or might not be that bad. But there is no debate about the antics of the anonymous censors: They denied somebody's constitutional rights to freedom of speech and expression.

# Carnal Sinners

As a recent study by The Kansas City Star shows, father doesn't necessarily know best when it comes to sex education.

If there were ever a control group from which to measure the effectiveness of abstinence-based sex education, it has to be Roman Catholic priests.

Expected to remain celibate their entire lives, priests receive little to no sex education in their Catholic high schools and none in their seminaries. So if abstinence-based sex education is worthwhile, Catholic priests ought to be the ones to prove that it works.

Guess what? Abstinence-based sex education doesn't work.

A recent study conducted by The Kansas City Star concluded that Catholic priests died of AIDS at least four times more often than the general population.

But for some reason, people continue to scream and yell that telling kids not to have sex is the only way to stop them from doing it.

A Web site titled "What Catholic Teens Need to Know About Sex" proclaims "the Catholic response to the demand for the promotion and distribution of condoms to teens must be a resounding NO."

The author goes on to say, in an eerily ironic comment in light of the recent AIDS study, "Perhaps the most important thing that today's teens need to know is that their parents, teachers and priests expect them to follow God's commands regarding the proper use of sex. For, in the final analysis, teens usually try to live up to the expectations that adults have for them."

Not, however, if those expectations are impossible to live up to. And if teens are expected to model their lives after their priests, Catholic parents everywhere ought to start panicking.

North Carolina's sex education program is abstinence-based, but leaves many of the particulars up to individual communities.

This political flexibility, however, could easily compromise the essential needs of students everywhere to be made aware of all of their sexual options - not just abstinence.

Sex is a scary business for young people to start participating in. And if teens are made fully aware of the risks associated with having sex, the emotional burdens that develop in sexual relationships and effective methods of protection against sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancies, they will make the right decisions.

For many teens that will mean waiting to have sex until marriage. But for many others it will mean having sex in a responsible, safe manner.

If state educators and the Catholic Church are in need of an impetus for re-evaluating their stance on sex education, the AIDS virus is staring them right in the face - a mockery of their moral heavy-handedness and interpersonal ignorance.

And perhaps if the Catholic Church had been more compassionate to the sexual and emotional needs of its clergy, many more of them would still be alive today.



# PC Movement Coming to Fruition

Conway, Ark., might not seem at first glance to be a likely locale for trendsetting decisions on social policy or answers to divisive questions of racial politics. But this small Southern town of 40,000 people houses a college that should be proud of the character it has exemplified in recent weeks.

Hendrix College, a small liberal arts school of Methodist affiliation, recently changed its mascot from the Warrior... to the Warrior.

This change occurred as a result of consistent efforts by Hendrix students, including one Lindsey Smith, now a graduate student at UNC (with a birthday this weekend - happy birthday, Lindsey!).

The original Hendrix Warrior was a caricatured American Indian figure in a headdress; the new Warrior, though he will retain the name of his predecessor, will have all the college-loyalty-inspiring vigor without the stereotypically primitive looks.

Hendrix's transition demonstrates an unusual combination of both sensitivity to racially charged issues and grace in responding to them. In the past several years, debates over racial issues have polarized many other campuses, with political correctness obscuring the real issues of injustice and inaccuracy.

For example, at my own alma mater, Swarthmore College, 500 students met to declare the campus "unsafe" for minorities after someone allegedly defecated on the floor of the Intercultural Center.

Even though the fecal matter turned out merely to be chocolate cake dropped with tragic misfortune onto the floor (believe it or not, it was the sprinkles on it that gave it away), the students asserted that the act represented Swarthmore's part in all of the racial hostilities seething beneath the surface of American society.

Certainly, specific acts sometimes disclose underlying tensions. This act, however, had been condemned by the community. Nearly one-third of the student body had turned out for a forum to denounce the purported act and to support those frightened by it.

A number of problems accompany the



TARA ROBBINS  
SMALL PRINT

description of the campus as "unsafe." First, to jump immediately to the conclusion that such an act represents the attitude of the community as a whole is another act of stereotyping. It is imprecise.

Second, to describe a community by the kinds of acts that violate it is akin to describing the moral code of a society by assessing the behavior of prison inmates, who in fact represent exactly the behaviors that the community has decided not to tolerate. It is inaccurate.

Third, to describe a community struggling toward racial understanding as categorically unsafe is to fail to appreciate the compassion resonant in the abundant demonstrations of support made by many students and faculty. It is unjust.

Given that a mascot, unlike an act of random vandalism, is designed to represent a community, the Hendrix students had a much more convincing case for the impropriety of their mascot.

The exaggerated features of the original Hendrix Warrior were an obvious misrepresentation of Native Americans.

The Chickasaw people have indisputable grounds to claim that they continue to suffer the effects of social disenfranchisement and prejudice.

But the students at Hendrix limited their discussion to the harmful cultural effects of the mascot itself. They did not broadly accuse the college of the many crimes for which it could not assume sole responsibility or make meaningful reparations.

Much of history demands this kind of grace to understand it and this ability to see gradations of right and wrong. As children, we learn about figures in history as great heroes, perfect men and women never seriously tempted or confused.

As adults, we begin to understand how complex all people are.

Though this might bring some disillusionment our way, we also learn how very costly every good act might have been to these imperfect people who were just trying to make their way in the world, like we do today.

Their choices were no easier than ours, and sometimes steps that seem so clearly right or so clearly wrong were not so brightly illuminated in the past. Insights gathered over time shed light on the past behind us as we crawl toward something still darkened, something we cannot yet see.

Often, we fail like the students at my undergraduate college to see that our history is always a mixed bag of poison and promise. We allow our anger at certain injustices to cast a long shadow, and we indict the innocent and the well-intentioned along with the malevolent.

The problem with the political correctness movement has not for the most part been its ideals or aims, but rather its tendency to view every ill-chosen word as a comprehensive symbol of every injustice of the past. Because of this tendency, the movement initially provoked resistance where it might have provided constructive solutions.

With the passage of time, however, much of the outraged emotionalism expressed and engendered by the political correctness movement has subsided to a level where fruitful discussions might occur.

Hendrix's recent change reminds us to continue working toward real social justice, not just political correctness, in all the likely and unlikely places.

Tara Robbins is a graduate student in the Department of English from Millville, N.J. Reach her at trobbins@unc.edu.

## READERS' FORUM

### Sticker Can't Make Up For Pesky Campaigners, Fliers, Lines at Poll Sites

TO THE EDITOR:

Now I know why no one wants to vote.

I went to the Student Union on Tuesday to cast my ballot, thinking it would be quick and painless. Coming from Fetzer Gym, I walked up the stairs and was literally bombarded by campaigners urging me to vote. They shoved paper in my hand and screamed their candidates names in my ear.

Because I knew who I wanted to vote for, I ignored their cries and discarded the fliers. However, the fact that they seemed so desperate for votes made me think twice. I hate to feel obligated.

But I wanted to go through the voting process, so I went into the Union and assumed the voting would be right there in the first-floor lobby. Nope.

I went upstairs only to find a huge line in front of me. OK, fine. This will be a quick line. Yeah right.

Well I had class in five minutes, so I went over to Hamilton Hall to vote. On the way, I received three more fliers and a dozen more pleas.

The line was much shorter in Hamilton, but the process continued to annoy me. They asked me my district. I live off campus, so they directed me toward an obscure map on the wall. After a minute, I located my district and was handed my voting materials: a Scantron and a voting packet.

People were just randomly standing around filling in their Scantrons using the walls for desks. I wasn't expecting voting booths or anything, but filling in Scantrons on the walls just didn't seem very organized or practical.

Finally I finished voting and had a sticker to show for it. Great.

Abbe Miller  
Sophomore  
Business

### Incorrect Quotation Simplifies Prof's Opinion On Grade Inflation

TO THE EDITOR:

I must correct a quote attributed to me in The Daily Tar Heel on Friday. The problem is that it is not a quote, but a simplification that then appears in quotation

marks. The article ("Committee: UNC Grades Too High") does a fine job of conveying the gist of my conversation with a reporter, with one important exception.

In discussing why there are differences in grade inflation across departments, I contrasted the simplicity of an answer in the natural sciences (the mass of an electron is ...) with the larger, more complex answers that often are required in the humanities and social sciences. I suggested the latter situation called for difficult judgments on the part of a professor, leaving greater room for social pressures on grading. In the article, this comes out as "Other departments are a little fuzzier."

That is just a little too far afield from my statement to stand uncorrected and does not seem to make a place for creative discussions about how complex answers can be sought from students without opening us all up to grade inflation. It is the kind of statement (if it truly were made by me) that would polarize the science and non-science faculties, something we cannot afford as we move to better integrate the sciences, social sciences, humanities and fine arts in the lives of students.

So, readers: Please read between the lines in that part of an otherwise admirable

piece of reporting and help us all find a way to keep grades under control as we find room for creativity and multiple perspectives in our studies.

Douglas J. Crawford-Brown  
Professor  
Environmental Sciences and  
Engineering, Public Policy Analysis and  
Ecology

### Berating Administrators For Snow Makeup Days Makes DTH Immature

TO THE EDITOR:

To letter-writer Keith Taylor and the editorial staff who protested on Wednesday the University's decision to have makeup classes on weekend days, I have one response: Would you rather have had no reading days for final exams or had a two-day Spring Break?

I was at the meeting where all these (and other) options were discussed thoroughly. Neither students nor faculty nor administrators wanted to cut short Spring Break because many people have made plans already to be out of town for the

entire break. Likewise, removing reading days was illogical and would have been an undue burden on many students and professors preparing final projects, papers and exams. Thus, the only choice interim Chancellor Bill McCoy had was to use weekends (a policy not unlike that at other area schools).

The University administration was given no choice about scheduling makeup days, and the chancellor and other top-level administrators did not want to make this decision without input from both students and faculty. Such input was given, and the decision made was hammered out with overwhelming agreement on all sides.

Finally, no one expects any more or less vigilance on the part of instructors to ensure class attendance; no one will be patrolling campus for tardy or delinquent students. We are all grown-ups here and can make our own choices. However, to berate administrators (and by extension those students and faculty who drafted this solution) for doing their job is to cast into doubt how mature some of us really are.

Todd M. Lidh  
Graduate Student  
Department of English



The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments and criticism. Letters to the editor should be no longer than 300 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. Publication is not guaranteed. 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: editdesk@unc.edu.