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The Daily Tar Heel

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Misplaced Protests

Students have the right to protest companies that recruit students on campus, but the interview room is not the proper place.

In the midst of another blame game, UNC lost sight of the real losers in Chiara D'Amore's Honor Court case.

D'Amore, a junior, was charged with willfully furnishing UNC officials with false information, misusing University property and obstructing University operations. The charges resulted from D'Amore's involvement in a protest of Kraft during the company's recruiting trip last fall.

But while negotiations were hashed out between D'Amore and University Career Services Director Marcia Harris, attention was focused on making peace with UCS and appeasing Kraft, whose parent company Phillip Morris has donated money to UNC in the past. D'Amore agreed Thursday to write letters of apology to these groups in exchange for UCS officials dropping the charges.

Although she issued a public apology, the real losers in this battle, UNC students, were largely ignored.

D'Amore's actions, whether naive and unplanned or malicious and calculated, hurt students more than any other group.

She signed up for an interview that another UNC student, who actually had an interest in working for Kraft, could have used. Job interview slots fill up quickly, and some students inevitably are turned away.

Although D'Amore quickly backed out of the interview when she realized the type of protest other students had planned, she must be held to some degree of responsibility.

Following her "interview," it is unlikely

Kraft representatives were able to focus on the student job candidates before them.

And whether or not Phillip Morris decides to shell out funds for UCS in the future, company officials will likely approach interviewing UNC students with more caution. Other companies could refrain from interviewing UNC students for jobs or internships as well.

Ideally, of course, job interviewers would treat all UNC students as individuals, making distinctions between interview candidates, but eliminating all bias might be impossible.

In this battle for the truth, though, UCS has shifted most of the blame to D'Amore, an easy scapegoat. But UCS officials should not escape so easily — they should also take some responsibility for the incident.

D'Amore was not registered with UCS, but she was able to sign up for an interview. If a UCS official had checked the list of interviewees in advance, D'Amore could have been denied an interview.

And UCS officials might want to consider stopping suspicious people dressed as macaroni boxes decorated with cigarettes from accompanying students to interviews.

D'Amore and other students have the right to protest Kraft's connection with Phillip Morris.

However, they should protest outside the interview space by staking out Hanes Hall, holding parades through campus or organizing the infamous candlelight Pit vigil.

Because when protesters ambushed Kraft last fall, everyone lost.

Quick Fix

Triangle Transit Authority should not let its push for expansion of bus service deter it from advocating for better mass transit options.

As an ever-increasing number of cars continues to clog Triangle streets and highways, improving public transportation has become a necessity — no matter what the cost.

Recently, Triangle Transit Authority has begun pushing for an aggressive expansion of regional bus service, spurred by worries about the future of commuter rail and pressure to cut traffic congestion in Research Triangle Park. By 2005, the TTA wants to triple its fleet and expand daily ridership from nearly 2,600 today to close to 7,000.

But improving service would require a fee increase within the next five years.

Residents of Wake, Durham and Orange counties already pay a \$5 vehicle registration fee that funds TTA. The proposed expansion would require an additional \$4.

It is appropriate that vehicle owners pay this extra money for improved mass transit. These people are likely the ones choosing to drive instead of take the bus, and they should pay a few extra dollars for their contribution to local traffic woes.

Besides, raising bus fares, which made up about 20 percent of the cost of regional bus service in fiscal year 1999, would only discourage people from riding.

TTA officials say this bus service expansion — which would include adding buses,

shortening time between arrivals on existing routes and expanding service to the outer reaches of Wake and Durham counties — is part of the first phase of a regional transit plan that was approved in 1995.

This phase also includes a regional rail system, which has been delayed because of troubled negotiations with the state Department of Transportation and the freight railroads.

Although a regional rail system would be the ideal solution to the Triangle's traffic woes, the problem begs immediate attention.

Obviously, light rail will not be coming to the Triangle anytime soon.

Right now, all the area has is buses, and it would be better to expand the existing system than to let the traffic problem fester while officials wait for the Federal Transit Administration to give the green light to the rail system.

However, the TTA must not get so caught up in the frenzy of expanding and promoting bus service that it forgets that a growing metropolitan area such as the Triangle cannot be served by buses alone.

Improvements to the existing system should be a stopgap measure to relieve the local traffic headaches until new and better mass transit options can be added.



Shooting Down the Media's Agenda

Air travel is statistically the safest form of transportation. So why are more people afraid of flying on a plane than driving in a car?

Because studies have shown that individual perception of the world is highly influenced by media content, disparity in media coverage clearly is a factor.

The sheer magnitude of a plane crash makes it more newsworthy than the average car accident. Consequently, it isn't difficult to understand why some people have an inflated idea of the danger of flying and might overestimate plane crash frequency.

More timely examples of how media coverage might lead to public misperception are last week's Michigan and Pennsylvania shootings.

Disclaimer: If you are incapable of suspending emotion in favor of rational thought, go to the crossword puzzle now.

For those of you still with me, let's look at some evidence of anti-gun bias in the mainstream media.

A University of Michigan study of more than 1,500 consecutive gun-related articles in The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, The Los Angeles Times and other newspapers found the National Rifle Association frequently was tagged with negative adjectives, such as "feared," "arrogant" and "radical."

In addition, NRA officials were identified by proper titles less than 20 percent of the time, compared to Handgun Control and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People officials, who were properly identified 64 percent and 73 percent of the time, respectively.

Another study done by the Media Research Center focused on major network morning and evening news shows between June 1997 and June 1999. Of the 654 stories dealing with gun policy that aired during this period, 91 percent expressed an anti-gun point of view. ABC's "Good Morning America" aired 93 gun policy segments, 92 with a pro-gun control angle.

Unfortunately, media vilification of firearms is grounded more in knee-jerk emotion than rationale.

Murder rates in countries such as Mexico and South Africa are more than double that of



JONATHAN TRAGER
THE LIBERTARIAN LETTERS

the United States, despite the fact that both governments actively restrict citizen gun ownership.

On the other hand, countries such as Israel, New Zealand and Switzerland (where there are an estimated 600,000 fully automatic assault rifles) have widespread firearm ownership, and each has a relatively low rate of violent crime.

Looking within our own borders, records show that during the first 30 years of this century, U.S. per capita handgun ownership remained stable while the homicide rate rose tenfold. In contrast, during the roughly 30 years between the alcohol and drug prohibition periods, handgun ownership rose by 250 percent while the homicide rate fell by more than one-third.

Clearly, private firearm ownership does not cause violent crime. In fact, there is a growing amount of evidence that proves the contrary.

In 1992, University of Chicago Law Professor John Lott and graduate student David Mustard analyzed crime data for more than 3,000 American counties. They found that while concealed-carry laws (whereby individuals may obtain a permit to carry a weapon on their person for protection) had little effect in rural areas, urban areas saw a substantial reduction in homicide and other violent offenses.

Lott and Mustard extrapolated that if all states adopted such laws, there would be approximately 1,800 fewer murders and 3,000 fewer rapes annually.

Criminologists such as Florida State University's Gary Kleck estimate yearly instances of defensive gun use to be between 1.5 million and 2.5 million. The vast majority of these cases involve brandishing the weapon without even firing a shot, whereupon the

criminal hastily retreats.

Of course, most media outlets won't openly advocate an outright firearm ban. Instead, they cloak their agenda in additional "controls" aimed at reducing accidents and protecting children.

In reality, firearm accidents are extremely rare.

According to the National Safety Council, accidental deaths caused by a firearm account for a mere 2 percent of the annual total.

Because less than 100 of these fatal firearm accidents involve children, and roughly 140 million American homes (45 percent) contain at least one gun, it seems most gun owners already know how to be responsible with their weapons.

Perhaps more people should crusade against swimming pools, because 500 toddlers drown each year.

Thankfully, the recent Pittsburgh and Michigan shootings have given opportunistic politicians a chance to climb on their soapboxes and demand more gun control laws, such as gun locks.

Just ignore that trigger locks increase the probability of accidental discharge from dropping the gun. Also ignore that burglars in Canada, where law requires firearms be locked up within the home, are three times more likely to break into an occupied home than American burglars, who surveys show are afraid of being shot by an armed resident.

If you think individuals who stockpile weapons in their closet are "gun nuts," I agree.

Nevertheless, the right to keep and bear arms is crucial in a world where law enforcement officers can promise only to act after a crime has been perpetrated, hardly a consolation if you've already been robbed, raped or killed. Yet government constantly tries to curb this right and undermine personal responsibility by capitalizing on irrational fears.

And by intertwining straight reporting with advocacy based on extremely rare tragedies, the media has proven it is often an all-too-willing accomplice.

Jonathan Trager is a senior journalism and mass communication major from Long Island, N.Y., whose parents wouldn't let him play with toy guns as a child. Please send Charlton Heston jokes to trager@email.unc.edu.

READERS' FORUM

Loyal WXYC Listener, DJ Respond to Recent Criticism in The Daily Tar Heel, Speak Out About Merits of College Radio Stations

TO THE EDITOR:

I was entertained by Scott Benson's letter to the editor concerning WXYC. I felt the need to clarify a few things to him and anyone else who might share his sentiments.

First of all, in my opinion, WXYC and other college stations in the area serve a purpose unrecognized by many students. That is, the purpose of enlightenment. Much of the music played at WXYC is music that has few other outlets. It might not be palatable to Mr. Benson, but I would find it hard to justify silencing it simply because he wants one more radio station to play the latest Smash Mouth hit. So, you see, playing unusual music is not due to elitism by WXYC, but rather open-mindedness and a desire to provide the community with something it might not have heard before.

Second, nothing would give WXYC more advertising revenue because it doesn't run advertisements. What you hear during talk sets are called public service

announcements. They do exactly that which Mr. Benson claims WXYC fails to do — provide information about campus events, concerts and the like. They even give away tickets to local rock shows.

I'm curious as to exactly what folks like Mr. Benson want to hear from WXYC. What does he consider mainstream, and how is it not provided by the numerous commercial stations in the area? And how much has Mr. Benson actually listened to WXYC? I submit that the problem might lie with Mr. Benson, not college radio.

I would like to end this letter with two points. First, Mr. Benson is absolutely right. There is not a decent radio station in the Triangle. There are in fact many great radio stations in the Triangle. WXYC (89.3) and WXDU (88.7) for truly enlightening, wide varieties of music, WNCU (90.7) and WSHA (88.9) for jazz, blues, gospel and more, and even N.C. State University's station, WKNC (88.1), has its merits.

Finally, many people do recognize the potential at WXYC. All it takes is an open

mind and a little patience. The last things this area needs is yet another mindless, generic "mainstream" station. That's why Stroke 9 puts out CDs.

James Hepler
Class of 1996

The length rule on letters was waived.

TO THE EDITOR:

I am writing in response to Scott Benson's letter concerning WXYC (89.3 FM), UNC's student-run radio station. Benson specifically criticizes WXYC's role as a college radio station. Essentially, the purpose of college radio is to provide the listening audience with music that is not available on other radio stations or media outlets. WXYC has operated with this mind-set since the early 1980s, contributing to the success of many now-mainstream acts, including REM and The Fugees.

WXYC has consistently been ranked one of the nation's top college radio sta-

tions, winning "College Station of the Year" from Gavin, a major industry trade magazine, in 1995. We also receive a steady stream of compliments from listeners around the globe who are able to listen to the station through the Internet. WXYC was the first radio station to broadcast 24 hours a day on the Web. (Yes, Brian Frederick, we have done our research and have concluded that the people at KJHK are liars.) Our mission is primarily educational, which is why we are located on the low end of the radio dial and also why we do not feature advertising (Benson alludes to "advertising revenue" in his letter).

Mr. Benson also bemoaned the lack of information about campus events and local cultural happenings available on WXYC. This is surprising, since DJs read public service announcements about local events every single hour. WXYC also regularly plays the music of artists touring the Triangle. DJs also give away several pairs of tickets to local concerts on a daily basis. Furthermore, WXYC was instrumental in

giving early publicity to many local artists such as the Squirrel Nut Zippers and the Archers of Loaf.

It is unfortunate that WXYC's presence on campus is not more visible, but writing misinformed letters to the DTH will hardly help. If anyone has comments or suggestions, please feel free to send e-mail to wxyz@email.unc.edu. And, as always, our DJs accept requests 24 hours a day at 962-8989. Thanks for listening.

Todd Ito
Class of 1998

Ito is a WXYC DJ.
The length rule on letters was waived.

Speak Out!

Write a guest column for the DTH. Submissions for the Monday Viewpoints page are due by 6 p.m. each Wednesday. For more information, call Editorial Page Editor Scott Hicks at 962-0245.



The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments. 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. 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.