

# Forum Explores U.S. Class Differences

By MANDY MELTON  
Staff Writer

Students and faculty disclosed their personal trials with social class and economic status in an open atmosphere Thursday evening.

During "A Night of Class," a forum which is part of the Living With Compassion Series, participants tackled major issues often overlooked by society. The event drew a modest crowd but eager audience participation.

Forum speakers said they became aware of economic differences at young ages by associating with their school peers.

"The fact that I qualified for free lunch in school and the other 70 percent of my classmates didn't alerted me to the fact that my family was different," said Corey Holliday, a UNC employee

from the Department of Athletics.

Many guests of the forum said they never allowed themselves to succumb to society's limitations, despite economic hardship. "Even though I realized I couldn't change my current economic status, I knew I could do better for myself in the future," said Sameka Battle, a sophomore communications major. "That is what I am doing now."

But some said Americans tend to not dwell on class differences. Joel Schwartz, a public policy and analysis professor who spoke during the discussion, said, "Americans refuse to assign themselves to a specific class. Instead, they want to identify with others by race, ethnicity, culture, religion and regionalism. (Americans) have the least developed sense of class consciousness."

Sophomore Jessica Lambert agreed

her economic status has nothing to do with who she is as a person. "I think of what I can achieve," she said. "This is a country of opportunity. Americans always see opportunity and say, 'I might be lower class now, but I will be something else one day.'"

Many participants said financial obstacles they faced actually improved their outlook on life. "I had to work my behind off to get everything that I have -- I had no alternative," Schwartz said. "Coming from a background of poverty is the biggest character building experience of all."

Forum guests also discussed the importance of giving back to the community, saying society needs to instill the desire for success in more of its youth. "Personally, I know I didn't get to where I am today by myself," said Alex Mehfar, a senior economics major. "By

remembering that fact, I know I have a duty to give back to my community and to give to those who need help."

Eliminating economic barriers in society was also a major topic of conversation. Melissa Exum, dean of students, said it will take time and effort, but equality can eventually be reached. "When we talk about (barriers) honestly and openly, we make a personal step toward improvement," she said. "It's all about personal courage and what we do when nobody else is looking."

Sophomore Andrea Fitcher said the forum opened her mind. "I gained a personal understanding of diversification," she said. "That's the whole college experience for me, learning perspectives that I would not have had otherwise."

The University Editor can be reached at [udesk@unc.edu](mailto:udesk@unc.edu).

# Online Shopping Aims To Help State Budget

Gov. Mike Easley hopes to decrease paperwork and increase competition with his e-procurement plan.

By KRISTY JONES  
Staff Writer

RALEIGH - Gov. Mike Easley announced Thursday plans to allow state agencies to purchase supplies online, an initiative expected to save North Carolina an estimated \$52.4 million per year when the program becomes fully operational.

The program will begin July 1 and is expected to be fully implemented in three years.

The initiative, known as e-procurement, is aimed at decreasing paperwork and allowing companies statewide to bid on the services or goods of various vendors.

The Web-based system is expected to create more competition for goods and services, lowering prices and reducing taxes for residents.

"Enabling the state to purchase goods and services from a network of vendors in a Web-based system will result in a significant cost savings to taxpayers," Easley said.

"This system will be available to local governments allowing for savings across the board."

The state is currently suffering from a budget shortfall some fiscal analysts say could hit \$750 million.

After receiving approval this month from the Information Resource Management Commission, the Office of Information Technology Services and Accenture exercised a portal contract option that allows for the e-procurement initiative to proceed.

The self-funded public/private partnership will not require any state appro-

riations. It will be funded by marketing fees paid by the vendors for the online usage.

Vendors will pay 1.75 percent of their total business accumulated by the Online service.

According to a press release from Easley's office, e-procurement programs have been used in private industries with savings between 3 and 10 percent. The private industries also have seen a reduction in purchase orders by 67 percent.

And more than one-half of states have e-procurement initiatives on some level.

According to a report done by Gartner, a technology research firm, 77 percent of government chief information officers plan to implement an e-procurement program within the next three years.

But North Carolina is one of the first to implement the program statewide.

"The success of this e-procurement project will serve as a model for states across the country," Easley said.

"Our commitment to this venture ensures that North Carolina will continue to be a leader in information technology."

Easley and others praised those involved for their efforts to help alleviate the state's budget problems.

"A great example of what we can do when we all work together," said Sen. Eric Reeves, D-Wake.

And Easley said the belt-tightening was not just a fiscal move.

"In our tight fiscal environment, we need to look for savings around every possible corner, but this project is not just about saving money," he said.

"It is about moving forward and renewing our commitment to one North Carolina."

The State & National Editor can be reached at [stntdesk@unc.edu](mailto:stntdesk@unc.edu).

# Sharon Pledges Unity With Barak, Labor

The Associated Press

JERUSALEM - Prime Minister-elect Ariel Sharon and Ehud Barak agreed on formation of a unity government Thursday, with Barak's party getting the key defense portfolio. Israeli media said Barak would be the new defense minister.

Sharon and Barak met for two hours Thursday, and Barak - who was resoundingly defeated by Sharon only last week - accepted Sharon's offer of the top Cabinet post, Israeli television and radio reported.

Barak's office said in a statement that a decision was made to set up a unity government and that Barak's Labor party would receive the defense and foreign ministries. Officials close to Barak were not available for comment on the media reports of his agreement to stay in government.

Violence persisted Thursday as two mortar shells fired by Palestinians fell on a Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip and Israeli soldiers killed a Palestinian who was trying to infiltrate another settlement.

No casualties were reported in the mortar attack at Netzarim, an isolated enclave in central Gaza. The settlement had come under mortar attack twice before. A Palestinian police officer whom Israel believed to be responsible for the earlier attacks was killed Tuesday

by Israeli helicopters firing rockets.

The Palestinian killed near Kfar Darom, another isolated settlement in Gaza, was identified as Nasser Hassanat, 23. He was a member of a Palestinian security force, according to documents he carried.

Funerals for young Israeli soldiers and a civilian - eight were killed Wednesday by a Palestinian bus driver - weighed heavily on politicians seeking a coalition between Sharon's Likud party and Labor.

Sharon, who cannot take office until he forges a majority coalition, was confident. "I will set up a unity government," he told reporters before meeting European Union peace envoy Miguel Moratinos. Sharon said it would "enable us to reach security and peace."

Other prominent Israelis had harsh words for the Palestinians.

President Moshe Katsav, visiting the family of a soldier killed in an earlier attack, said Arafat incites Palestinians to attack Israel, while talking about peace at the same time. "That's Yasser Arafat, with his conflicting messages and dual morality and two-faced behavior."

A leading rabbi recommended that Israel seize the Palestinian town of Bethlehem as retaliation for gunfire at a Jewish neighborhood in Jerusalem and Rachel's Tomb, a Jewish holy site near Bethlehem.

# SBP Contenders To Debate Sunday

Student body president candidates Justin Young and Eric Johnson will debate at 7 p.m. in O8 Peabody Hall.

Staff Report

Students, faculty and staff interested in hearing more from student body president candidates Eric Johnson and Justin Young before voting Tuesday will have their chance Sunday night.

The Daily Tar Heel will host a Student Body President Runoff Debate at 7 p.m. in O8 Peabody Hall.

Both candidates have agreed to meet once more in a debate setting to highlight the important issues of the 2001 student body president race.

The debate will follow a traditional format. Johnson and Young will have the opportunity to present opening statements to the audience, followed by moderator questions addressed to both candidates.

The audience will then be able to pose questions to each or both of the candidates.

After the question-and-answer portion of the debate, the candidates will present their closing statements.

The debate between Johnson and Young will be broadcast live on Chapel Hill cable Channel 4.

All students, faculty and staff are encouraged to come out and participate in the debate between the two runoff candidates.

will be performed at **Playmakers Theatre**. Tickets are \$5 for students, \$7 for nonstudents. Purchase tickets in the Pit between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.

**Saturday**

4 p.m. - Jazz/blues historian and legend **Albert Murray** will present a lecture in the Hanes Art Center auditorium. A book signing and reception will immediately follow the lecture.

**Sunday**

7 p.m. - Alpha Epsilon Omega and Phi Beta Chi will be hosting a **free Valentine's dessert** in celebration of "The Value of a Woman" in the Union Cabaret.

To attend, please RSVP to Nicole Strachan by calling 914-3067 or sending an e-mail to [nicoles@email.unc.edu](mailto:nicoles@email.unc.edu).

**Monday**

11 a.m. - **Masala** will kick off a week

## Campus Calendar

**Today**

11 a.m. - The **Center for Slavic Studies** will be hosting the **Russian and East European Career Fair** in 039 Graham Memorial until 3 p.m.

The **Business Panel** will take place from 11:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

The **Government and Academia Panel** will be from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. E-mail questions to [efleming@email.unc.edu](mailto:efleming@email.unc.edu).

7 p.m. - The **Black Music Series: "Tribute to Louis Armstrong"** will take place in Toy Lounge of Dey Hall.

The tribute will celebrate the contributions of African American music traditions.

This session will explore the contributions of be-bop Louis Armstrong, Robin Vader will facilitate this session.

8 p.m. - Eve Ensler's **Obie Award-winning "The Vagina Monologues"**

of celebrating cultural diversity in the Pit. There will be cotton candy and various booths from **campus multicultural groups**.

4 p.m. - The **Triangle Computer Science Distinguished Lecturer Series** will highlight **Dr. Takeo Kanade** of the Robotics Institute at Carnegie Mellon University.

Kanade will speak on "Virtualized Reality: 4D Digitization of a Time-Varying Real Event and Its Application" in 011 Sitterson Hall.

**Tuesday**

noon - The **Sonja H. Stone Black Cultural Center** sponsors **Black History Reflections: Rebecca Clark, activist**.

Clark will share her stories of living in Chapel Hill and working at the University.

**Items of Interest**

Go online today to check out "Ask

Alex," The Daily Tar Heel's new online column.

The column is filled with the answers to the University community's most random questions.

"Ask Alex" can be viewed at [www.dailytarheel.com](http://www.dailytarheel.com) under the Community Tab flag.

To submit your own question, e-mail [alex47@email.unc.edu](mailto:alex47@email.unc.edu).

**For the Record**

The Feb. 15 story titled "ECHHS: Class Rank Should Go" incorrectly stated that the N.C. School of Science and Math was a private school.

The school is public.

The Daily Tar Heel regrets the error.

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**This Weekend @ Carolina**

saturday

**Women's Lacrosse**  
at Henry Stadium  
ALL DAY

**Men's Tennis vs. South Carolina**  
Noon at Cone-Kenfield  
Tennis Center

sunday

**Men's Lacrosse vs. Fairfield**  
1pm at Fetzer Field

**Women's Basketball vs. FSU**  
1pm at Carmichael Auditorium

**Hardee's SPORTS SHORTS**  
Students & Faculty Admitted FREE w/ID!

**Attention Oxfordians!**

Meeting for:


- Participants in Oxford Summer school Abroad, or
- Anyone interested in enrolling in Oxford Summer School Abroad


**Monday, February 19, 2001**  
4:00 p.m.  
305 Greenlaw

**Oxford Summer School Abroad**

Informational meeting with Professor Christopher Armitage

Summer School Abroad Program to Oxford, Summer 2001





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\$20.00 General Public  
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Tickets may be purchased at the Sonja Haynes Stone Black Cultural Center, 962-9001

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Please contact Kim at 962-6810  
[www.unc.edu/depts/iaar/sac.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/iaar/sac.html)

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