

Opinion



Board Editorials

Change Cannot Wait

The overhaul of North Carolina's mental health care system is long overdue and needs a new foundation

North Carolina is finally beginning to make strides in the overhaul of its mental health care system, but the state had better quicken its pace and look to provide better community health programs if it wants to avoid costly federal lawsuits.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Justice Department began a civil rights investigation into the quality of care at the state's four mental hospitals.

The action lit a fire under legislators and resulted in the passage of a bill setting out the basic governance structure of local mental health boards and service agencies.

The bill also set up plans for a network of community-based services and allocated \$47.5 million for new mental health, substance-abuse and developmental disabilities services.

The state Department of Health and Human Services estimates that 322,000 adults in North Carolina have a serious mental illness.

Many of these people never undergo

treatment. But those who do find an archaic state mental health system.

North Carolina is one of the few remaining states in the nation that relies heavily on large mental institutions. In the last decade these institutions have come under increased heat for the way they treat patients and the way they are operated.

The backlash against mental institutions as the primary source of mental health services came to a head in 1999 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that mental hospitals should be used only as a treatment of last resort.

But it is not only the institutions themselves that have problems. It is the overall mental health care system.

Communication, or lack thereof, between hospitals, health departments and law enforcement agencies has, for years, been a major problem in North Carolina. The lack of communication has resulted in people with mental problems being bounced back and forth between mental

hospitals and health departments, and sometimes ending up out on the street without receiving the care they need.

In order to get people the care they need, the state must now set up an effective mental health system that recognizes the need for people in all fields to work together.

The states that have the most successful mental health care systems rely not solely on one solution but on a multi-faceted approach.

For example, Ohio has a system that puts the bulk of the responsibility in the hands of community programs that seek to serve the state's mentally ill by providing localized treatments, adequate housing and vocational training.

Right now, North Carolina's mental health system is expensive, ineffective and stretched to its limit.

But with the proper groundwork and open lines of communication it can be reformed to a quality system that will be worth every penny.

Guarding Safety

If the National Guard's role in airport security increases, more training and organization should be required

American Airlines flight 587 crashed Monday, and all indications are that a catastrophic engine failure was the cause. Although investigators are denying any link to terrorist activity, a massive blow has been struck to the confidence and security that Americans were only beginning to regenerate.

The presence of the National Guard and federal marshals at the nation's airports is a welcome sight. But recent stories show that the vulnerability of current practices and policies illustrates the need to improve security both in presence and in performance.

Steps have been taken, by the government as well as private business, to increase the number and quality of security forces at airports. But in the wake of Monday's tragedy, restoring consumer confidence should be a high priority.

The federal government assigned an additional 1,800 members of the National

Guard to meet the increased demand for airport security that comes along with the holiday travel season.

The additional guards, however, must receive comprehensive training for the situation they are about to enter. The time necessary to administer that training must not be sacrificed, no matter what timetable the airports or passengers request.

Security breaches such as the incident at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport, where a man with seven knives and a stungun was able to pass through a checkpoint undetected, have made a mockery of the current state of airport security.

Without clearly defined roles and an overall coordinated effort, the additional guards might not be effective. Efficient training and organization will increase the impact of the added 1,800 guards.

Private security companies have already begun to improve the quality, not just quantity, of their service. Argenbright Security,

the nation's largest airport security company, is in the process of overhauling its management and policies in response to harsh criticism from Washington, D.C.

The combination of federal and private security forces, however, stresses the need for cooperation between the two entities. Matters of jurisdiction and responsibility should be decided well before the guards are in place.

The public and private sectors have, to this point, not shown the proper amount of cooperation in accomplishing the tasks for which they each have to be responsible. Duplicating some services and ignoring others will not meet the nation's needs.

Ground crews, baggage handlers and private airline employees must also be integrated into security measures. With everyone on the same page, the airline industry and the country as a whole will better adapt to the changing dynamics of the current global climate.

As the World Turns, Drama Needs to Stop

There is a lot of drama going on round these parts. Now don't worry, Pauper Players. Hear me out, Ebony Readers Onyx Theater. Relax, Lab! and Company Carolina.

Shakespeare is above reproach. Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller and Henrik Ibsen are all perfectly lovely. Y'all are not part of the problem.

I speak of a different breed of drama – the soap operas that are constantly enacted among students all over campus. It's as though we just can't relax – there are so many things to worry about in today's world, and we still seem preoccupied with the incidentals. UNC students have been sweating the small stuff hard-core.

From student social groups that lead endless expeditions into Self-Righteous Land to those folks who make the daily trek back to "Eighth Gradeville" everyone seems to make mountains out of molehills seems to be popular around these parts. And it often makes me feel like I'm stuck in bad daytime television.

The fights! The intrigue! The melodrama! See it all at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Oh, these days of our lives. There is a distinct difference between being intentionally melodramatic for one's own amusement (which I do at least hourly) and genuinely concerned about serious issues. People often bring drama and complication to things that really do not need to be dramatized or complicated.

Worry about war. Worry about recession. Worry about classes. (If anyone would like to worry/pray about my classes, you're welcome to.) But it seems like the little things we're preoccupied with – what so-and-so said, who's rushing where, who gets what tickets. A goofy ad from David Horowitz causes a fury. Bickering among senior class officers turns the whole office upside-down. Does it really matter in the grand scheme?

Often I wish I could institute my own educational reforms here at Carolina. I would teach the primary tenets of what I like to call the "Erin Fornoff School of Harmonious Living." I'd have a seminar that would consist solely of a syllabus. On the syllabus would be printed three words: *Let it go*. It would be a class about living an easier, less frustration-filled life – ways to cut down on the drama.

It could be a "Guiding Light" for those who find themselves caught up in the dramas we create for ourselves. Sometimes we all seem so full of woe – and for what? It's all a question of what is incidental and what is integral. It seems to me that this campus could benefit from such lessons.

It would work – if we could just relax, cut people some slack and try not to be so quick to judge or jump to conclusions. Then, we wouldn't have such a great sense of drama. This seems to show an equally heightened sense of self-importance, we, in our college bubble, blow our small troubles out of proportion to a grand extent.

We've got friends giving each other silent treatment, roommate meltdowns, angry protests, loud disagreements, underhanded acts, self-righteous fervor, folks personally attacking one another, a churning rumor mill, various support given and withheld.

All we need now are some clandestine affairs, mothers sleeping with daughter's boyfriends, long-lost evil twins, and people burying each other alive.

My friend Jesse said of the drama (which is not a new thing), "It's like I'm surrounded by a bunch of method actors for soap operas."

I half expect to hear thunder crash and see lightning strike out the window when people make statements these days.

I'm just wondering at what point "The Real World" became the real world, or at least the one on college campuses. I say we harness this energy and use it for good instead of evil. Just think what could be done if we redirected our attention to things that really matter.

Don't get me wrong – I have certainly spent my share of time laying on a chaise lounge with my hand thrown across my forehead, bemoaning my fate, but this is ridiculous. It's important to care about things and be aware – there is just no point in worrying over little things when there are such big ones out there.

"As the World Turns," we can end the drama that adds so much trouble to our lives.

Erin Fornoff knows the truth about you and the poisoned wine. Send her your suggestions, confessions and soap opera plotlines (personal or otherwise) at fornoff@email.unc.edu.



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SWEETNESS AND
LIGHT

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READERS' FORUM

Directors Lend Thanks To Granville Residents For Fund-Raising Efforts

TO THE EDITOR:

A heartfelt thank you goes out to all Granville Towers residents and staff who participated in the recent "Pennies for Peace" campaign.

Each floor competed against the other floors to raise the most pennies to be donated to the Disaster Relief Fund of the American Red Cross.

We are proud to report that nearly \$1,050.00 was raised for the American Red Cross!

In addition, money raised from a candy guessing game and guest tickets for our Late Night social event brought our grand total raised for the American Red Cross to \$1,227.37. We are so proud of our nearly 1,400 residents!

Thank you for participating and for helping make Granville Towers such a strong community.

Nicolle D. Mercer

Director of University Relations

Melissa Hotchkiss

Director of Community Programming
Granville Towers

Student Asks for Flag — Calls Stealing Flag From House Truly Unpatriotic

TO THE EDITOR:

Due to recent events, patriotism and nationalism have peaked. Americans everywhere are displaying their true colors outside their homes: red, white and blue. Unfortunately, at our house, a couple of drunken thieves and a defenseless flag made sure, through the night, that our flag was not there.

Had I known this was the way to show I love my country and that we are a nation united, I would have a closet full of stolen flags by now.

Maybe my housemates and I just weren't patriotic enough. I'll tell you what: next time we'll commemorate our fallen heroes by leaving it at half-staff a few more weeks. Besides, it will make for an easier heist.

I would always look forward to the warm greeting she'd give me on the way in. Now the remains of the flag holder dangling from the post are saddening. I bet Old Glory never saw it coming.

How could she, minding her own business, quietly instilling us with pride and hope everyday?

What's even more upsetting is that apparently the terrorist attacks elicited from U.S. citizens not only a positive response but also a shameful one.

I hope whoever took the flag is as proud of their country as I am. I hope that, after they buy themselves a new flag holder, they let it fly as freely as we did. I hope that every time they watch a news story about our brave soldiers in Afghanistan, they too have to fight back the tears induced by the memory of the events of Sept. 11. I hope they actually understand what that flag symbolizes, and what it means to be an American.

But if they don't ... then I want my flag back.

Aaron Mesmer

Junior

Journalism and Mass Communication

Sangam Nite Planned for Saturday Night; Ticket Sales This Week in the Pit

TO THE EDITOR:

Apu Nahasapeemapetilon is probably the most famous South Asian in the United States of America. His chutney squishees, arranged marriage and nontuplets have in

many ways defined the image of South Asians in America.

While cows, convenience stores and red dots are undoubtedly an important part of every South Asian's life, I wonder how many people know what Ramadan is, or what Diwali is, or what the basis of Gandhi's nonviolent resistance movement was?

After the tragic events of Sept. 11, a whole different set of associations have been attributed to South Asians – associations that are even less justified and warranted than the previous ones (although I for one do not own a convenience store, a cow or wear red dots). With South Asians representing 10 percent of the American population and 5.2 percent of Carolina's student body, these images will no longer do. Although Apu is as beloved to us as he is to you, at Carolina alone there is a wide array of South Asian students representing every field and every walk of life.

For us as South Asian students, we are faced with a constant struggle – of ideology, lifestyle and culture. Sangam is an organization that strives to turn this struggle into an opportunity.

An opportunity to fuse the two most significant aspects of our lives – the culture with which we were raised and the society in which we live. Sangam Nite exemplifies

this – uniting East and West in an extravaganza of dance, song, and creativity. To us, Sangam Nite is more than a mere performance – it is a celebration – of ourselves, our dreams and our roots.

In the past few months, America has embraced the theme of unity. We would like to take this opportunity to invite you into our world – to see us at our most exposed, yet also in our element. The UNC community is one of the most diverse, open-minded campuses in this country, and this is why we urge you to be a part of the Sangam Nite experience – not only to share in our culture but also to help it evolve.

We ask for only three hours of your time – and, if none of this convinces you, at least come to see beautiful girls, flashy costumes, crazy dances and entertaining acts. Let us prove that (brace yourselves ...) our culture can produce more exciting things than tandoori chicken and spicy curry.

Sangam Nite is at 8 p.m. on Nov. 17 in Memorial Hall. Tickets are available in the Pit.

Justin Doshi

Junior

Business Administration

The length rule was waived.



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.