

Opinion

The Daily Tar Heel

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Board Editorials

Behind the Times

Now that Sen. Jesse Helms has reversed his position on AIDS, he needs to make up for lost time

For almost 20 years, U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., fought to keep millions of dollars of federal funding from going to AIDS research.

He recently stated that for many years he had taken the wrong stance on AIDS. While this is encouraging, it is nothing more than too little too late.

When AIDS first emerged in America in the 1980s, the popular belief was that it was strictly a gay man's disease. Sadly, many people allowed their prejudices to override their compassion for humanity and ignored the disease — Helms included.

As more people learned that AIDS is a disease that affects everyone from pregnant mothers to children who have undergone blood transfusions, attitudes about the disease changed. People became better informed, and support for a cure grew and grew.

All the while, Helms held to the old idea that AIDS was a disease that only affected the gay community and people with reck-

less sexual habits. Ten years ago, Helms lamented that money was allocated to AIDS research not because of the threat of epidemic but because of media hype and the people who "make the loudest noise in Congress."

It took nearly 20 years, a new century and long talks with Franklin Graham and U2's Bono for Helms to finally realize the errors of his ways. This is unacceptable for any political leader, especially one as powerful as Helms.

The country needs leaders who are willing to listen and become informed on issues without allowing their prejudices to override their good judgement — especially on issues of life and death.

Fortunately, Helms has been trying to make amends for his past misdeeds in the last few years. In 2000 he praised the Global AIDS and Tuberculosis Relief Act, which provided funds to help children orphaned by the AIDS epidemic in Africa.

Helms strongly believes that AIDS can

best be fought in Africa through the work of faith-based programs. This idea might have come from his close relationship with Franklin Graham, son of Billy Graham and head of Samaritan's Purse.

While Helms' strong push to control the epidemic in Africa should be applauded, he must work harder to end AIDS here in the United States and be a visible, vocal advocate in his last few months in office.

Helms still believes that AIDS is ultimately a "moral problem." This outdated view of the AIDS epidemic has likely kept him from making a complete turnaround in his views.

Helms and other right-wing conservatives must realize that AIDS is much more than a moral problem. With more than 40 million people in the world suffering from AIDS or HIV, there is no time to tell people they shouldn't have contracted AIDS.

Now is the time for action, and Helms has the opportunity to be an effective AIDS advocate. Who would have thought?

Abandoning the Environment

The Bush administration needs to rethink its decision about Superfund and support its progress

Even though the Bush administration is apparently supportive of the chemical and oil industries, special interests are not an excuse to lay off important work for the environment.

In 1980, the Superfund program was established. It uses special corporate taxes to clean up abandoned industrial sites that pose an environmental risk.

However, the reserves have decreased, and the Bush administration didn't reauthorize the taxes, which expired six years ago. This has put a dent in the progress of the fund's work and is perpetuating possible risks to the environment.

If the Bush administration doesn't reauthorize the taxes, continued funding for this program will be passed on to taxpayers. This is unacceptable and goes against the foundation of the program, which is based on the idea that "the polluter pays."

The corporate taxes from the fund are used to clean up sites where a party can't be

identified as responsible. Seventy percent of the sites are cleaned up by the companies themselves because it's cheaper, and the other 30 percent is paid for by the fund.

Taxpayers should not be responsible for the negligence of companies to bring sites up to standard.

Since 1999, taxpayers have picked up 50 percent of Superfund's costs — a program founded on the principle that the public shouldn't have to suffer both financially and environmentally from the effects of abandoned sites.

There are 1,551 sites recommended for cleanup by the Environmental Protection Agency, 30 percent of which have already been brought up to standard.

But since the fund has been dwindling, progress has significantly declined. The rate of cleanup has declined since Bush took office, with only 47 sites cleaned in 2001 compared to 80 repaired each year from 1996 to 2000.

Groundwater contamination is the largest risk, and as many sites continue to fall into further disrepair, the effect on the environment worsens. Only 40 sites are scheduled to be cleaned up this year.

In addition to financial issues, management problems have also most likely attributed to Superfund's degradation. Not only does the Bush administration need to rethink its decision about the program's funding, Superfund also needs to be reorganized to promote its progress. Many sites will be added to the EPA's list in the next 10 years, which further recognizes a need for the government to continue its support of the fund.

Democrats in Congress plan to push the Bush administration to reconsider its decision — as well they should.

Protection of the nation's environment is one of the president's commitments, and the support and reorganization of Superfund is an important part.

READERS' FORUM

UNC Women's Center Director Praises Daum, Supports Her Platform

TO THE EDITOR:

As one of my tennis competitors used to say when she blew an easy shot at the point of her victory, "I can't stand prosperity." While she meant to criticize her self-defeating style, as a woman she not only had to deal with her inner self-criticism but also with negative comments from others about her skills.

Take Jen Daum, our new student body president, as a case in point. While Jen did not sabotage her own campaign to the point of defeat and I have no idea about her inner self-doubts, she was met with several negative commentaries in The Daily Tar Heel after her election.

I am favorably impressed with Jen because she took the initiative to develop a mentorship proposal for undergraduate women with a couple of other students and then brought her ideas to the Carolina Women's Center for implementation. She also worked tirelessly with a group of employees and students to improve childcare options and actively participated in a press conference on the topic. Last Friday, during the Faculty Council meeting, the

chairwoman, Sue Estroff, congratulated Jen on her election as student body president and said that Jen was the only candidate who had talked with Sue about faculty concerns prior to the election.

My hope is that Jen can celebrate her victory and then continue to reach out to her supporters and to her detractors to build coalitions that can provide the strongest student voice.

In this way, she will continue to win by incorporating the views of all into her game plan (including any nagging self-criticism she may have).

Congratulations, Jen!

Diane Kjervik
Professor and Director
Carolina Women's Center

Overall Dance Marathon Committee Deserves Praise for Hard Work

TO THE EDITOR:

Scott Werry and the 2002 Dance Marathon Overall Committee deserve lots of praise for their efforts in putting on the largest student fund-raiser in UNC history. Not only did they raise over \$122,000 to give to the families of children in the N.C.

Children's Hospital, but they also changed the lives of countless UNC students by giving them the opportunity to help those less fortunate. As former Overall Committee members, we can attest that these 12 individuals spent between 30 and 40 hours a week for the last several months in fund raising and preparation for the event. Their dedication, drive and compassion should not go unthanked. So if you see Scott Werry, Julie McManus, Ashley Hux, Shannon Saunders, Marcellus Parker, Leia Kelly, Mark Hosemann, Sarah Katherine Leaver, Natalie Halbach, Callie Taintor, Katie Jackson or Sarah Slater on campus, please give them a pat on the back and say thanks.

Dan Brand
Senior
Business Administration
John Wallace
Senior
Business Administration

DTH Criticized for Not Covering African Events On Continent, Campus

TO THE EDITOR:

As members of the Organization of

African Students' Interests in Solidarity, we feel that it is important that certain issues be addressed by the most widely read paper on campus, namely The Daily Tar Heel. In respect to the critical events involving the African continent, we are greatly disappointed by the DTH's lack of coverage given to several significant events occurring on the African continent. Since it is our mission as an organization to educate our fellow students about the culture, history, and future of Africa, we felt it is our obligation to bring this matter to your attention. We take it for granted that our campus newspaper would be equitable in distributing as diverse an account of the world events as the student body that is supposedly represents.

An example of a blatant neglect in coverage is the absence of information about the natural disaster that occurred in several West African countries. This tragedy, which took place earlier this year due to unexpected amounts of rain during the dry season, caused a flood, which resulted in the death of thousands. Is this not a newsworthy event? Then there is the formal apology the Belgian parliamentary commission gave to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. After 41 years, the Belgian parliament concluded that Belgium was "morally" responsible for late indepen-

dence leader Patrice Lumumba's death, saying the government and Belgium's late King Baudouin knew of plans to kill Lumumba but did nothing to prevent them. In addition, the DTH failed to document the formal apology made this month by the Dutch government for their involvement in the slave trade.

While you underestimated the importance of these current events on the continent of Africa, it is an even greater disappointment that our own DTH forgot or neglected to cover a very substantial event regarding a large annual celebration of the African continent, Africa Night. This event that had a large number of people in attendance from UNC and surrounding communities took place on Feb. 17 in the Great Hall.

Since you have been reluctant to advertise or acknowledge these important events pertaining to a continent we take this opportunity to invite the UNC community to attend OASIS meetings at 7 p.m. on Sundays in Room 206 of the Student Union and hope that that this letter will bring forth worldwide news in the DTH.

Zawadi Barskile
Maureen Ben-Davis
OASIS

It's Never Too Early to Get a Few Supporters

I trust that if you're at all like me then you've been rejoicing for the past week because election season has officially ended!

But before you begin celebrating too heavily, I must be the bearer of bad news. If I'm not mistaken, we're only 47 weeks away from the beginning of next year's election festivities. Yuck!

Over the past few days of post-election revelries, I've come up with a sure-fire way of not becoming homicidally annoyed at the hundreds of people giving me pieces of paper and telling me to vote: to become the name on some of those sheets of paper.

That's right. I'm officially declaring my candidacy for (insert name of some campus office).

But before you start blindly jumping on my campaign bandwagon, allow me to fill you in on some of the more important elements of my platform. Due to space limitations, I can't display all of them, but you'll get the point that I am the candidate for you, the everyday student.

Tuition: My plan to fight tuition increases is foolproof. You do not have to pay tuition. What about everyone else? Who cares? But you will get a free ride for your experience here.

If you pledge your vote now, I might even find a way to throw in a toaster.

Parking and Transportation: I have a two-pronged plan of attack on this issue. First, I think we're all in agreement that, aside from Franklin Street, there is little use for the rest of Chapel Hill. I say that we seize control of the rest of the town (in a nonviolent coup) and turn it into a giant parking lot. This would guarantee that you'd have a free parking spot no more than two blocks from campus. The only downside I see to this is that it might be difficult to find your car periodically.

Don't despair; I'm working on training cute little chimps to escort you to your car.

By the time my administration takes office, I fully expect them to be housebroken.

The second element to my parking plan is one that I think we can all relate to ... what to do when you're running late. Sometimes it's your fault. But oftentimes it's completely beyond your control, and why should you be punished for that?

In the event that you are "seriously" late, you may park your car anywhere you'd like. Late for a chemistry exam? Park your car right outside the doors of Venable. In fact, better yet, we'll just have valet parking at every campus building.

Good idea, me!

Grades: Sadly, this is something that no student leader can completely control, but I do have one idea that I think is super nifty. Every semester, there's that one class that, no matter how hard you work, you just don't have enough time to do well.

What I'm proposing is that you're allowed to take one class every semester as your "gimmie" class. When you register, you can designate which class you'd like to do this with. You never have to attend the class, you don't have to do any of the work, you don't even have to buy the book, and you get an A-.

If you're a real gunner and want to try for the 4.0, you can.

Men's Basketball: I'm sure the most pressing issue on your mind is the fact that, barring a surprising increase of the schedule length (by a hundred games or so) it looks like our men's basketball team is going to fall short of the 20-win mark. That's a shame and something that you should never have to endure here. While there's not much I can do about the state of the basketball team, I do think that you should be compensated for a season where we don't win at least 20 games.

In the event that this happens again, I say that Coach Doherty will buy each student a steak.

I do trust that I can count on your vote next February. I know that these issues (along with making sure someone can flush the toilet and you won't die from boiling water during a shower in Connor) are on the top of your agenda, and that makes them very pressing for me.

I've given these issues a lot of thought (about four minutes), and I'm pretty sure that at least part of my platform consists of ideas.

Travis Raines is currently accepting applications for campaign positions, as well as feedback on his well-thought-out platform, at traines@unc.edu.



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.