

Opinion



Board Editorials

Maybe Never Enough

Six months later, New Yorkers — and the world, for that matter — strive to move on and accept Sept. 11, but not without daily emotion, remembrance and strength

NEW YORK — It is a labyrinth, this pit. Ground Zero descends 70 feet into Manhattan's foundation of bedrock, a chambered web of death and twisted steel. More than a million tons of rubble have been transported out of the pit in 98,000 truckloads.

By late June, the last piece of concrete, the final rusted I-beam will have been removed and laid to rest in a New Jersey landfill.

But where the rubble ends, so does the hope of finding more bodies.

It is now six months after two jets plowed into the World Trade Center, murdering thousands and breaking the hearts of millions.

On Monday, March 11, a 12-year-old girl left an orphan by the disaster, flipped a switch, and two powerful beams of light — a temporary memorial — filled the gap in New York's skyline.

Memorial services were held across the city, including at the Church of St. Francis of Assisi, the parish of fire department chaplain Mychal Judge. He died after following his flock to the towers where he was needed.

On Monday, the six-month anniversary of Sept. 11, much of the city wept once again.

But at rush hour that day, the most distinct sound on Fifth Avenue was a lone homeless trumpeter playing "America the Beautiful," and I was one of the few who stopped to watch him.

New Yorkers move too fast to pay attention to a homeless man, even one belting out a song weighty with new patriotism. This means New York is moving on from Sept. 11, but only by so much.

Fewer than a third of the estimated 2,830 dead have been correctly identified. After the World Trade Center fell on that bright blue morning, thousands of New Yorkers wandered the streets for days, thrusting photocopies of the missing into strangers' faces.

I once saw a minivan plastered with victims' pictures creeping down Broadway. But it was in late October, a time far beyond any chance of hope for those vic-

tims' survival.

They are all gone, most never to be found.

The signs of disaster are still inescapable in New York.

Even normal conversation is still relatively impossible without some mention of Sept. 11 fall-out.

CATE DOTY

EDITORIAL NOTEBOOK

Six months later, my friends are still nervous about living there. One swears that Manhattan will soon be destroyed by an atomic bomb.

It's nervous hyperbole, but it's not far from the fears of so many who witnessed something few ever thought could happen. So logically, what's to stop a mushroom cloud from rising over midtown?

The city's health department has launched "Project Liberty," urging New Yorkers to "feel free to feel better."

Calls to LifeNet, the health department's crisis hotline, are slowly on the decline after the attacks, but for some New Yorkers the fires at Ground Zero were never put out. Some are moving away from the city. Some have reverted back to old destructive patterns like alcoholism, and some have withdrawn into themselves, fearful of another loss.

Not all of the city's coping mechanisms are helpful.

On the N train to Queens, the subway walls are plastered with health department-issued confessionals of New Yorkers coping with Sept. 11.

There's Nancy, 48, from Brooklyn, advising commuters to spend time with friends. There's Carl from the Bronx claiming that cleaning his apartment helps him release his sadness.

Thanks, Nancy and Carl. These confessionals are gag-inducing (I know I'm not alone in my skepticism toward them), and herein lies a question: Even to mourn a heartbreaking disaster like Sept. 11, when is enough, well, enough?

It's a question that many outside of New York, especially some survivors of the Oklahoma City bombing, have been asking more frequently.

New Yorkers are impatient for the city to get completely back to the way it was —

before American flags hung in every store window and street vendors were virtually assured a quick sell on U.S.A. pins.

The crassness that accompanies public mourning tires them, they say.

Those who lost friends and family in the attacks simply want them back, or at least an end to the daily public reminders of Sept. 11. Private grief is overwhelming enough.

But for a city that lost so many and a country that presumably lost its innocence, enough will never be enough, simply because of Sept. 11's far-reaching fallout.

It's our cowboy president hunting Osama bin Laden, a man who has, so far, proven himself far too wily for the United States.

It's my uncle in Special Forces identifying the body of one of his men killed in an Afghan skirmish.

It is a Pakistani man in a Queens restaurant swift to pledge his allegiance to America yet equally quick to affirm that the United States will never understand the complications of peace.

It's Daniel Pearl's death and columns like this, written by those still grasping to make some sense of it all.

We now discern from each death the weight of our own vulnerability.

As for New York, the streets of Queens were quiet on the evening of March 10. From a living room in Astoria, I watched the World Trade Centers fall again with the same person I sat next to in North Carolina on that horrible day six months ago. This time, like many in New York, we were watching a documentary on Sept. 11, and there were no frantic phone calls to relatives and friends.

There was only the piercing dread of seeing again what had come before. And then again, there was the unbreakable silence of the thousands dead.

But the next day we woke up and went to work, just like the rest of the city that still mourns its buried downtown.

New York thought it was dying for a brief moment, and then like all those who are born and reborn, found itself again in the struggle for breath.

It is still not enough.

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READERS' FORUM

On-Campus Apartments Will Offer Better Option Than Off-Campus Living

TO THE EDITOR:

I think the idea of apartments on campus especially for students is wonderful. I am a freshman who is considering moving off campus, but the cost plus being far from other students and campus have stopped me, at least for next year. I like some of the benefits of on-campus housing — having programs set up by resident assistants or others especially for those in my building, finding out about events easily because of posters and e-mails and getting to know a lot of people. However, I don't like the noise, the crowding, sharing a kitchen with so many other people, and having to leave during breaks. Being in an apartment would alleviate some of these problems, and I believe campus apartments would be more affordable than many off-campus ones, especially if two students occupy each room. I hope that I'll get to take advantage of this service before I graduate. The only problem I see with this is the distance — putting some juniors and seniors behind Hinton James would make them farther from classes than most freshmen; however, most off-campus apartments would do the

same — and these apartments would at least be close to some parts of campus. I think a better place might be slightly north of campus or east or west of academic buildings, but campus apartments are a good idea overall, no matter where they are.

Denny Wilkerson
Freshman
Education

Law Professors Decision To Boycott Speech Not Arrogant, but Reasoned

TO THE EDITOR:

On Thursday, March 7, a letter to the editor was placed in the Reader's Forum by Richard Linderman attacking the decision by five UNC law professors to not attend the events surrounding Clarence Thomas's visit to the law school. We write today to clarify a few misconceptions expressed by our law school colleague. His attempt to trivialize the importance of the law professors' dissent is rooted in a deep misunderstanding of their position on this issue. The professors he speaks of (who happen to comprise the entire African-American law faculty) made their decision to forego participation in the activities after careful delib-

eration and forethought. This decision was substantiated by a heavily attended "teach-in" held the day before Justice Thomas's arrival. The professors facilitated the teach-in with a very clear purpose in mind: to form a sound understanding of the justice's jurisprudence through the proliferation of his most recent opinions. Unlike a rhetorical speech, analysis of his judicial opinions is the most salient way to understand his legal reasoning. As demonstrated at the teach-in, the professors were well acquainted with Clarence Thomas's political agenda and the school of thought to which he subscribes. As such, Linderman was right. They were in fact left with nothing to learn from his visit and decided not to attend. We personally fail to see the so-called "arrogance" that belies this decision.

However, there is a certain sense of arrogance implicit in the lack of deference afforded to these professors. Linderman's opinion is obviously impulsive in nature and essentially mischaracterizes the premise behind their dissent. No measure was ever undertaken to disrupt the day's events (i.e. vocal protests, walk-outs, etc.) because such conduct would unnecessarily focus attention on their actions rather than their message. These professors abstained from such inappropriate conduct and simply chose not to attend. Again, we

fail to see the arrogance in that decision.

Adam E. Aberra
Andre Wharton
Third-Year Law Students

Events On Campus Work To Increase South Asian Awareness for Students

TO THE EDITOR:

I am writing to let the campus at large know about the many South Asia-related events that are taking place on UNC's campus as war rages in Afghanistan, tensions between India and Pakistan rise, 500 Muslims were massacred this past week in Gujarat after a train carrying Vishwa Hindu Parishad activists was attacked. With the war in Afghanistan, and since India and Pakistan are nuclear powers, South Asia has become a "problem area" in the eyes of the world, a tense region where countries could go to war at any moment. To enhance understanding of the complex culture, politics of South Asia and its connection to current affairs, several events on South Asia are being organized on campus. One is an ongoing South Asian film series (7 p.m. in Greenlaw Hall each Monday). The films that we have selected represent different actors within the South

The Joke's on You, Laughing Into the 21st

Back when I was a wee lad, I remember dreaming of the 21st century and thinking, "Wow, what an amazing time to be alive!"

Sure, the 20th century had its moments, like the never-should-be-withdrawn-from 1972 Antiballistic Missile Treaty and the return of Christ (Texas, 1993).

The new millennium though, well, who knew what unimaginable marvels of the future it could bring.

Surely, we thought the future would resemble something to that of the world of Star Trek, complete with peace on earth, a plethora of blinking lights and lots and lots of aliens bent on killing Captain Kirk.

Ah ... the mystique of the 21st century — and how fitting that we would have an arguably disappointing anti-climax to that whole Y2K issue! Half the world dreaded a 21st century apocalypse, featuring such world-ending disasters as getting a bill from the local Blockbuster for 100 years worth of overdue fines on "Breakin' 2: The Electric Boogaloo." The other half partied like it was, well, any other new year. And the next morning, we were all waking up from a kinda-bad- kinda-not-so-bad dream, all hung over — except, we were thinking, "Hey, I'm all hungover in the 21st century! Wow, I need me some Tylenol ..."

All of us, I suppose, except for those "purists," who I'm sure were all thinking, "Those suckers! We have yet to see the 21st century! Fools! Ooooooh ... need Tylenol ..."

The 21st century wasn't born of fire and brimstone like everybody predicted — no, the transition into the promised land known as the future was uneventful and unremarkable. And so, it's no wonder that I still feel like we're living in the past.

Oh, don't get me wrong — I think the human race has made significant advances since I've been alive, but in certain respects, we haven't budged an inch since I was a wee lad, dreaming about the 21st century.

Take for example the state of "funny" — you know, like jokes and stuff.

On a recent episode of HBO's "Dennis Miller Live," that oh-so-witty, talks-too-much late-night host delivered one of his patented funny-picture captions, as he so often does.

To make a long story short, the picture portrayed George W., fresh from his tour of Southeast Asia, (assumably) petting his dog. The caption? Something to the effect of, "Don't worry, we wouldn't eat you!"

Ha ha ha, another joke about those Asian savages who eat poor, cute, innocent dogs. To follow this up, last month, Jay Leno's crack on Korean short-track skater Kim Dong-sung who "was so mad he went home and kicked the dog, and then ate him," (referring to Kim's disqualification, which led U.S. skater Apolo Ohno to be awarded gold) — a pair of jokes that could have been heard way back in the days of the decidedly intolerant 20th century.

Oh yeah — sure, these jokes are funny all right. Hey, I'm a lighthearted guy just like anybody else, and there's no way I take myself seriously enough to find dog jokes offensive.

But that doesn't mean these kinds of jokes should be OK in the 21st century. Writers for Dennis Miller and Jay Leno, all I have to say to you is: "Sweet Jesus! If you're going to make fun of Asians, in the very least, try something new! Jokes about eating dogs, being slant-eyed and owning convenience stores are old and tired and part of the repertoire of 5-year-olds!"

I'm not all for PC — in fact, I hate political correctness. But, if I had my way, there wouldn't be any jokes at my, or anybody's, expense.

A famous French philosopher named Henri Bergson once wrote an entire essay on the state of funny titled "Le Rire" ("The Laugh"). In it, he outlined, categorized and ranked the various things that humans find funny. And way at the bottom was "ridicule," the basest and most horrible kind of funny.

What's funny is that Bergson wrote this in anticipation of a new century — the 20th century. How sad that 100 years later, we're no better off.

So the next time you hear one of these jokes-at-somebody's-expense, you can chuckle, laugh, guffaw or whatever. I do. But be aware of what exactly you're laughing at and realize what an ass you are for doing so.

I do that too.

Eugene Kim has eaten dog. Once. In Vietnam. Last year. By accident. And it was not that bad. Ask him all about it by e-mailing him at chinook@email.unc.edu.



EUGENE KIM
OUTCLASSED AT
BAGGAGE CLAIM



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