

BOARD EDITORIALS

DANGEROUS MOVES

Long Island University officials damaged the spirit of the press in punishing its college newspaper for reporting a student's grades.

College newspapers should face scrutiny for their reporting, but officials at Long Island University in New York have taken their criticism a few steps too far.

Administrators at the university, which founded the prestigious George Polk Awards for journalistic achievement, responded forcefully to an article reporting on the resignation of LIU's student body president, Abdel Alileala.

The article in *The Seawanhaka*, the weekly newspaper of the university's Brooklyn campus, blamed Alileala's "academic struggles" and listed his failing grades without his permission or input, according to *The Associated Press*.

This raised concerns among LIU officials. Provost Gale Stevens Haynes argued that the article might have violated federal regulations barring the school from releasing students' personal information.

"The institution has to take a stand in ensuring respect for students' privacy," Haynes told the AP.

"This is truly not about the student newspaper and trying to control it and shape it in a way that's comfortable for us."

Although some action was clearly necessary, the university took serious and controversial missteps to correct what it saw as an invasion of privacy.

Those choices included suspending *Seawanhaka* Editor Justin Grant, who wrote the article, for three weeks as well as changing the lock of the newspaper's office and removing its faculty adviser.

Several of these measures do more to restrain the freedom of the press than to defend students' right to privacy.

The Society of Professional Journalists particularly was irked by the university's efforts to prevent reporters from physically being able to publish their work.

"We do change locks like that in Third World countries, but this is the United States of America,"

Jim Highland, the society's national vice president for campus chapter affairs and a Western Kentucky University journalism professor, told the AP.

Although the university was right to be concerned about the confidentiality of Alileala's grades, officials should not have interfered with the direct operation of *The Seawanhaka*.

The newspaper's reporting appeared to be sloppy at best, but Grant didn't act in a manner that warranted his suspension.

Although LIU officials certainly have the right to protect the privacy of the students, the university certainly has gone too far, especially considering the fact that the school prides itself on its commitment to excellence in journalism.

By taking such extreme measures, officials undermined the tradition of freedom of the press that they so actively advocate. Although they technically are operating within the letter of the law, it is definitely outside the spirit of journalistic freedom.

University officials have said that they recognize Grant's right to publish the grades but object to how they were presented.

They addressed their concerns correctly by removing the newspaper's faculty adviser, whose reckless participation in distributing the grades likely warranted his dismissal.

But punishing Grant as a student for his work as a journalist is a form of outside coercion deemed unacceptable by today's media standards.

Officials at a school that carries as much prestige as LIU should have known better. They should have dealt with the problem simply as a privacy issue with its faculty.

By shutting down *The Seawanhaka*, however, officials transformed the incident into something considerably bigger than it needed to be.

They should be wary of infringing upon constitutionally protected freedom of speech in the future.

NEED FOR REFOCUS

While abstinence among young teenagers is ideal, sex education should use more information about various contraceptive methods.

Click. In the music video "Toxic," Britney Spears gyrates seductively in a flesh-colored, sparkling bodysuit while flashing to the camera a smoldering set of bedroom eyes that could make a priest drop his collar.

Click. The women of the NBC reality show "The Apprentice" don tight tops and flirty demeanors to sell booze to male customers at a Planet Hollywood in New York.

Click. Competitors on "Temptation Island," a Fox network reality game show, consider ditching their significant others thanks to the efforts of scads of tanned, toned bikini-clad sextops.

Just about everywhere one turns — be it in magazines, television or movies — the U.S. pop culture landscape during the past two decades has been dominated increasingly by sleek, hard bodies and suggestive innuendo.

One thing has been made abundantly clear by this major-market exposure: Sex is cool.

The result? U.S. teenagers reared on prime-time sensuality are becoming sexually active earlier and earlier.

While teen pregnancy rates have decreased overall during the last decade, the simple threats of unwanted pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases remain constant.

The United States is in the grip of a renewed focus on sex education in the classrooms, and many governing bodies, including the Bush administration, have adopted an abstinence-only focus as the only sure way to combat the dangers of teen sexual activity.

The Bush administration in particular also has been criticized for allocating federal money to religious and anti-abortion groups that sponsor sex education programs promoting abstinence, often with a moral slant.

The benefits of classroom abstinence education are undeniable: The only way for teens to avoid pregnancy and STDs is simply not to engage in sexual activity at all.

But abstinence-only policies ignore the reality that youth face tremendous societal and peer pressures regarding sex. Failing to educate teens in the use of proper contraceptive methods is playing a dangerous game with the future of our nation.

Many abstinence advocates argue that teaching adolescents about contraception only will encourage teens to have sex.

But a joint study by the Centers for Disease Control and the National Institute of Child Health show that 88 percent of 12- to 18-year-olds who pledge abstinence have sex before marriage, as opposed to 99 percent of those who do not pledge abstinence.

The study also shows that of those teens who pledge abstinence but still have sex, only 40 percent use a condom during sex, as opposed to 59 percent of teens who have not made any kind of abstinence pledge.

The sad truth is that teenagers receive encouragement to have sex from almost every facet of their world, particularly peer groups and the media.

The job of educators should be to explain the intricacies and consequences of sexual activity as thoroughly as possible. They should make sure teenagers are equipped with the knowledge of how to protect themselves if they do choose to have sex.

And it's definitely out of line for the government to provide public money to religious and activist groups to pursue a moral agenda.

Parents are ultimately responsible for the moral education of their children. Education about moral propriety should come from mothers and fathers, not teachers or traveling road shows.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The above editorials are the opinions of solely The Daily Tar Heel Editorial Board, and were reached after open debate. The board consists of seven board members, the editorial page associate editor, the editorial page editor and the DTH editor. The 2003-04 DTH editor decided not to vote on the board and not to write board editorials.

READERS' FORUM

Yarbrough's passing is great loss to University, Campus Y

TO THE EDITOR:

The University community and Campus Y in particular lost a valiant champion last week in the death of Marilyn V. Yarbrough, professor of law.

In addition to her distinguished career in legal education, Professor Yarbrough served as the chairwoman and member of the Campus Y Advisory Board since 1998.

Professor Yarbrough grew up in Raleigh in the days of segregation. She was a National Merit Scholar from Ligon High School, then the black high school in the city school system, which led to a place at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania. After one miserable semester, she transferred to Virginia State University where she graduated with distinction.

Professor Yarbrough never forgot the struggles of undergraduates taking that leap from high school to university, particularly minority students making their way in a predominantly white college.

She worked with Campus Y because of its long history of welcoming all students to Carolina and because of its enduring commitment to social justice.

Through her leadership of the Advisory Board, Campus Y also renewed its efforts to enhance the intellectual climate of the University through structured

debates of pressing issues, a wider range of speakers on Y discussion panels and participation in the reform of the honor system.

Professor Yarbrough will be sorely missed by all who knew her here at Carolina.

Virginia S. Carson
Campus Y Director

Increasing dropout numbers don't bode well for state

TO THE EDITOR:

The state of North Carolina is facing a crisis with the number of students who are dropping out of school each year. The number is alarming but certainly not surprising. Now thanks to a new focus on how the state reports graduation rates, many citizens who support our schools have come to realize that we have a serious crisis.

While it may be easy to forget about a few kids — after all a 4.78 percent dropout rate for grades 9-12 as recently reported by the NC Department of Public Instruction doesn't seem all that bad — it becomes a pill more bitter to swallow when one realizes that approximately 40 percent of North Carolina's youth are leaving school without a high school diploma. The wake-up call for action is now, or we will continue to see a rise in the number of children who leave school without the skills and education to either enter the workforce or

continue their education.

As taxpayers, we will pay now or later for children who do not have the necessary education for a job that pays a living wage. Education, even alternative education, is much less costly than prisons and welfare.

Here is the economic reality. Dropouts cost the state of North Carolina enormous amounts of lost revenue and tremendous costs in social programs. For instance, a dropout is twice as likely to be unemployed, three times more likely to commit a crime and end up in our courts and six times more likely to become an unwed teen parent. Moreover, it is estimated that 75 percent of America's state prison inmates are dropouts at a cost of approximately \$25,000 per year, per inmate. The cost of juvenile incarceration is more than \$60,000 per child per year and many of these youth re-enter the criminal courts again and again.

The latest figures from the Council on Economic Advisers show that for each class of dropouts, the average cost of prison, parole and welfare over the adult lifetime averages about \$69,000 per young person in that class. Accordingly, last year's crop of dropouts will eventually cost the state \$1.3 billion in these three categories alone. Moreover, with a diminished earning capacity that is \$9,200 less per year than a high school graduate, those 19,000 dropouts will eventually cost the state \$400,000,000 in

unrealized taxes.

So what is the solution?

For the past fifteen years Communities In Schools has been helping North Carolina children stay in school and prepare for life. CIS works, and we have the statistics to prove it. Last year, 99 percent of North Carolina's CIS students who could have dropped out chose to stay in school. Moreover, 93 percent of our students were promoted to the next grade, 91 percent of our seniors graduated, 85 percent improved their grades and 84 percent improved attendance. Furthermore, statistics show that growing numbers of CIS students, who without CIS would have dropped out, are graduating from our 4-year colleges, our community colleges or entering our workforce as contributing employees.

Our challenge is that CIS is only serving about 10 percent of students who need those services. Without additional funding to sustain and grow programs within our existing CIS communities and to continue to expand into new communities, CIS will never be able to serve all of these children. It is time that we start funding programs that work.

There are many reasons students drop out of school, some of these reasons are not school related at all. This is where Communities In Schools plays such a vital role. By working with school administrators who are able to identify these children, we then bring in community

resources that meets the need of each student to help them succeed in school. Schools and teachers cannot and should not have this extra burden of addressing home and community issues.

Communities In Schools is ready to work with all of our schools, with DPI and with our community partners to address this serious and growing crisis. It will take all of us working together — business partners, educators, parents, community members, agencies and the students themselves — to solve the dropout problem.

For more information visit Communities In Schools Web site at <http://www.cisnc.org> or call 832-2700.

Linda R. Harrill
President
Communities In Schools of N.C.

The length rule was waived.

TO SUBMIT A LETTER: 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 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 them to editdesk@unc.edu.

ON THE DAY'S NEWS

"We have all of us at times suffered from the liberty of the press, but we have to take the good with the bad."

THEODORE ROOSEVELT, U.S. PRESIDENT

EDITORIAL CARTOON



COMMENTARY

As music, blues best weaves together fabric of America

Freight Train Ann doesn't seem the type to keep quiet about things that she would rather scream. By the time her voice reaches its fullest stature, it's not likely that you'll be able to ignore her either. Not that you would want to anyway.

Ann is the lead singer for a Florida-based blues/soul/funk/country/honkey tonk band named Green Flash. She's wearing the tightest red pants I've ever seen, and it's impossible to take your eyes off of her. Her hair flows down her back like a gown. She doesn't dress quietly, and she certainly doesn't sing quietly either, belting out her range of blues originals and covers that sets the assembled listeners on fire in the Ringside Cafe in St. Petersburg, Fla.

One man wearing a cowboy hat and a pin that proclaims "MIA Vet" pounds an invisible keyboard at his table as he listens, even though there isn't a piano player in the band. A tall black man shuffles with a middle-aged white woman. The woman shouts out that she loves Patsy Cline as Ann belts out "Walkin' After Midnight."

"Women be wise," Ann cautions. "Shut your mouth. Don't advertise your man." I nod like I understand as I devour the plate of ribs in front of me.

My party requests "Sweet Home Chicago," an old song by Robert Johnson. The saxophone player — a man with a long ponytail and a wise grin, as if he knows something about this music that the rest of us don't know — grabs the microphone and tears into a scathing rendition. "Come on! Baby don't you want to go! Sweet Home Chicago!"

I've never been to Chicago, but



BILLY BALL
FOR KIDS WHO CAN'T READ GOOD

I certainly want to go there now. And there is the rub of the blues. The spark of desire to take it on the road, a pilgrimage. Perhaps the most important pilgrimage in American music as blues music might be the most important American music ever recorded.

"Lord knows I've got rambling all on my mind," Robert Johnson sings. It is the crux of the blues that there be a pilgrimage. The lyrics invoke a weary traveler's log at almost all turns.

Johnson might have defined that persona, in addition to defining that music for ears all over the world. Although the blues were sung before Johnson, the man invented the music as far as record sales go with his two mysterious recording sessions in the mid-1930s.

He's the legendary American figure who sells his soul to the devil at the crossroads for wealth and fame, a myth of the Delta Blues whose myth is just as important as his reality. He's the figure who appears in the film "O Brother, Where Art Thou" in the form of Tom Johnson.

"I went to the crossroad, fell down on my knees," Johnson sings in "Cross Road Blues." "Asked the Lord above, 'Have mercy, now save poor Bob, if you please.'"

It's the original populist song. The blues is the song of the caged bird. It's the theme of American

capitalism. Make your living. Work hard, and you'll make it, right?

Or maybe it isn't really about the reality of American society, but rather it's as close to the original intent of the American dream as one can get. And like the greatest art, it's as universal as it is timeless.

It's a response to the perception that we can take to the road and make our fortune, if we have the right amount of determination and skill. It's the heroes of Jack Kerouac's "On The Road" taking to the road for something that they're not quite sure of the entire time, but knowing that they have to go look for it anyway.

As Johnson's song invokes, it's going to the cross roads where anything from love, wealth, heartache, fame and disaster can happen, and it's going there anyway.

Here's a vote for blues music as the greatest American music ever made and the most important. It's the music that turned inward for solace and substituted populist simplicity and passion for educated musical chops and made better players in the end anyway.

I would like to take to the road and find out exactly how much of this music still lives. A writer at Rolling Stone magazine might tell you that the blues for all intents and purposes is dead.

But in the moment when Freight Train Ann grabs her microphone and stamps her foot and screams, "It hurt, it hurt, it hurt so bad," you know that it couldn't be dead.

If it was dead, it wouldn't hurt so much.

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