

# RACE RELATIONS WEEK

## Engage in week focused on race

I usually don't start with quotes, but I am going to do it today.

This excerpt is from an address given by Theodore Roosevelt in 1910 — and I've got to warn you that it's long. But bear with me, because it will be worth it. Here goes:

"It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is in the arena ... who strives valiantly, who ... at best knows the triumph of achievement, and at worst, fails while daring. His place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."

Now you're probably wondering what this has to do with race relations.

For the past two years, I have

LILY WEST  
CO-CHAIRWOMAN, SARR

been co-chairwoman of Students for the Advancement of Race Relations, a Campus Y organization. Our mission, broadly, is to improve race relations on campus and in the surrounding community through activism and volunteer work.

This hasn't been easy. Race is complicated.

And so are individuals. Working with SARR, I've found that many are ready to criticize, but few are ready to act.

Students criticize the administration for doing too little or doing too much. Groups criticize other groups for what they are or what they aren't. People criticize other people for being too similar or too different.

And where are we now? Cynical. Complacent. Self-segregated.

Personally, I'm tired of those "critics." I'm tired of those who talk of tolerance but turn their backs on debate. I'm tired of those who preach diversity but don't welcome difference. And I'm tired of those who let ignorance determine their ideology. These are the timid souls who play it safe.

It is harder being "in the arena," confronting controversial issues and risking possible failure. My work with SARR has allowed me to realize that success isn't instantaneous or guaranteed, especially when race relations are involved.

Not everyone thinks our work is noble, and some people wish we would just leave things the way they always were. But obliging these individuals would mean compromising our fundamental principles.

Scheduled from Oct. 1 to Oct. 9, this year's Race Relations Week is an opportunity to prove that you are more than a critic.

The week is a manifestation of our efforts to tackle the challenging issues that plague so many individuals but are rarely confronted by society. By providing opportunities for communication and exploring issues involving race, Race Relations Week helps bridge those divides that fracture the framework of the Carolina community.

We are confident that, if equipped with adequate knowledge of different peoples and cultures, students will be capable of appreciating diversity. It is with this mission that we encourage students to cherish their similarities while celebrating their differences.

I encourage you to attend one of our many events. Whether it is a coffee talk with former UNC-system President William Friday and journalism Professor Chuck Stone or a debate on the possible renaming of Airport Road, you will be participating in a movement that is committed to its goals, regardless of the obstacles that arise.

So stop standing on the sidelines. It's time to get in the arena.

Contact Lily West, Co-chairwoman of Students for the Advancement of Race Relations, at [lilywest@email.unc.edu](mailto:lilywest@email.unc.edu).

## ISSUES OF RACE ARE STILL RELEVANT TO UNC COMMUNITY

Every day, scores of students sleepwalk pass Saunders Hall, named in honor of William L. Saunders — a member of the UNC Board of Trustees and a leader of the Ku Klux Klan in North Carolina in the late 1800s.

Students might have heard about a local group's complaint that the Chapel Hill Police Department recently didn't see a black officer promoted to the rank of captain. Some students soon will attend panels investigating many Reconstruction-era topics, including a University award named in honor of a white supremacist who was involved in the University's 1871 closure.

These issues reflect the past, but they continue to affect our lives today. They shape the lens through which we view our environment — and they're worth re-examining closely.

To say I've glossed over several complicated issues would be correct. History, legacy and race relations are complex entities that cannot be dealt with adequately on a single page.

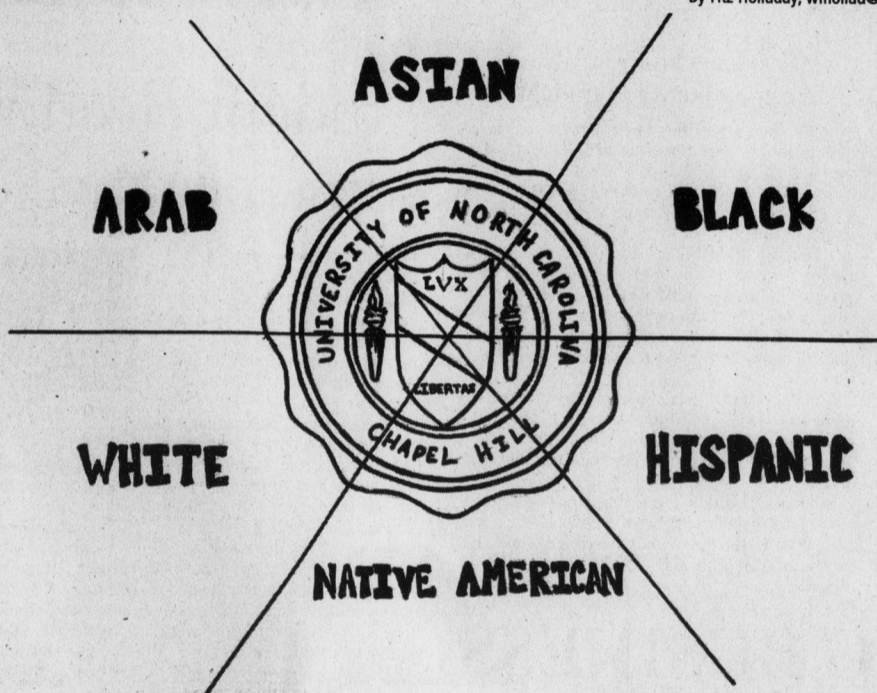
How the University should deal with its history, what course the campus should take to relieve present-day tensions and how we respond to greater national issues such as affirmative action are all questions that lend themselves to subjective analysis. Even if we all agree that we need a tolerant society, there are different priorities for different groups.

Race Relations Week was planned by Students for the Advancement of Race Relations, a Campus Y committee. This committee's efforts should help to educate students and to inspire them to make a difference where they can.

Members of the campus community should take advantage of this opportunity to share their diverse perspectives and to hear the voices of fellow students and outside speakers, all of whom have something to contribute.

Contact Jeff Kim, editorial page associate editor, at [jongdae@email.unc.edu](mailto:jongdae@email.unc.edu).

## VIEWPOINTS CARTOON



By Fitz Holladay; [whollad@email.unc.edu](mailto:whollad@email.unc.edu)

## Complacency is a danger that we must avoid

As a senior, I am experiencing the last of everything that Carolina has to offer — things such as Clefhanger concerts, the Pit preacher's antics, cube painting and, of course, Race Relations Week.

I remember as a freshman being excited that a predominantly white University — the one I attended — thought race relations were so important that it dedicated an entire week to teaching about and improving them.

As I've had the opportunity to learn and grow at this institution, my thoughts on Race Relations Week have changed.

Don't get me wrong. It's wonderful that Students for the Advancement of Race Relations takes the time to examine race relations using a week of events that involves a variety of student groups, faculty members and administrators.

During that week and shortly thereafter, we are all content in knowing we've done our part to contribute to the advancement of race relations on campus.

But it is impossible for every single issue under the umbrella of "race relations" to be covered in a single week. What has usually happened is that race is examined in terms of black and white, with other racial and ethnic groups often being left out.

Furthermore, there is generally one idea or racial phenomenon that is examined.

Last year, it was self-segregation — and I suspect this year might bring talks of the impending presidential elections in terms of race, of the recent opening of the Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History or of the local debate concerning the potential renaming of Airport Road.

But race relations need an in-depth examination and require personal acceptance of responsibility.

More specifically, we all need to look at ourselves and to deter-

ERIN DAVIS  
PRESIDENT, BLACK STUDENT MOVEMENT

mine how we contribute to the dynamics of race relations on this campus — both positively and negatively.

Far too often, we settle into our comfort zones of similarity, and we don't allow ourselves to truly experience all of the diversity that this University has to offer.

While we each knew that Carolina would have a lot to offer us academically, we each accepted — and hopefully embraced — the fact that attending this University would allow us to learn from others who are not like us and those whose race or ethnicity might be different from our own.

There is no denying that this University has come a long way in the area of race relations, but we shouldn't let those achievements and our progress allow us to slip into complacency.

We shouldn't be naive and think there isn't any progress to be made. While racism might not be as overt as it was in the past, we should focus on breaking down the systems of institutional racism that are still in place.

Race Relations Week should be a time for open dialogue among all members of the campus community, in addition to being a time for introspection.

By offering open dialogue, we can become increasingly aware of the issues of racial concern on campus — and by being introspective, we can become more knowledgeable about how we individually perpetuate systems of racism.

Any problems concerning race are most likely deeply rooted problems that cannot be solved overnight. Nevertheless, I think we owe it to ourselves and to this University to take the necessary steps to improve race relations.

Don't you agree?

Contact Erin Davis, president of BSM, at [endavis@email.unc.edu](mailto:endavis@email.unc.edu).

## Understanding is necessary for race relations

About 140 years ago, an entire race of people was released from slavery.

About 60 years ago, members of another race were released from U.S. internment camps. Fifty years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court ended legalized segregation in public schools.

Thanks to the efforts of those before us, we now can boast a generally tolerant society — and UNC is at the forefront of this progress. In fact, diversity is something that is encouraged here by everyone from fraternities to cultural groups. So why do we even need a Race Relations Week?

The short answer is that progress was achieved through constant vigilance — and the way to lose it is simply not to pay attention anymore.

However, we're not just trying to maintain the status quo. We're trying to make things even better. How exactly do we go about doing this?

The first step is to realize that this level of progress has not affected everyone. Since Sept. 11, 2001, hate crimes and discrimination against those of Arab and South Asian descent have risen dramatically. Last year, a Sikh student of South Asian descent was physically assaulted on Franklin Street after being taunted for the way he looked.

If it can happen here, it can happen anywhere. Therefore, we must continue to promote tolerance among these pockets of ignorance, and Race Relations Week is a major effort in that direction.

Another reason for Race Relations Week has to do with the idea of self-segregation along social lines, most clearly illustrated in the Pit at lunchtime.

When you consider it on a superficial level, this seems like a major problem. But when you think about it, people naturally befriend those to whom they can relate — this is often based on similar backgrounds.

SATISH MISRA  
PRESIDENT, SANGAM

The fact that we see these different groups self-segregating isn't a bad thing in and of itself. But for those who isolate themselves in these or any other types of groups and care only about differences in appearance, it is a major problem.

It is among these individuals that we must develop an attitude of cultural curiosity, one that will drive them to learn more about the diversity of our student body.

On that same token, it is the collective responsibility of all campus groups to remain open and inclusive so that no individual ever feels unwelcome. For student organizations, this means keeping opportunities for involvement and leadership open to all interested students.

I, for one, would be proud if someone not of South Asian descent became a leader in Sangam, UNC's South Asian awareness organization. It would mean that our philosophy of being completely inclusive and welcoming has succeeded, allowing us to reach across boundaries to promote cultural awareness.

We do not need to dissolve racial, ethnic or other social groups — instead, we must ensure that, regardless of what groups people associate with, they have a real understanding of the diversity around them.

So why do we need Race Relations Week? It's to keep ourselves vigilant in the effort to remove ignorance from our society and to promote mutual understanding. In doing so, we aspire to make a major leap forward in our continuing effort to build a "more perfect union" — which is, in the end, what Race Relations Week is all about.

Contact Satish Misra, president of Sangam, at [misras@email.unc.edu](mailto:misras@email.unc.edu).

## Legacy doesn't mean racism

One thing that Dinesh D'Souza, a respected scholar and Indian immigrant, said on campus on Sept. 13 was that it's important for Americans to keep the nation's past in perspective.

The United States is not unique for having once had the age-old practice of slavery. It should be judged in light of the fact that it abolished it.

In the same spirit, one could argue that Chapel Hill is not unique for holding residue of racism from its history.

It's special because racial diversity, tolerance and appreciation are able to flourish here on campus.

It's true that we aren't far removed from the past. Chapel Hill, like much of the South, is still in history's shadow.

It is not our grandparents but our parents who grew up during

DEB MCCOWN  
GUEST COLUMNIST

the civil rights struggle.

It is my father — not my grandfather — whom I asked when I wanted to know what it was like to attend a segregated school.

But to our generation — black, white and everyone else — the fights and fire hoses of the past are just that — the past.

Though we might hear the stories, we fortunately don't have to experience them.

That isn't to say all of history's ills have been cured.

Being female, I can attest to the vast difference between Chapel Hill and elsewhere.

On this campus it is simply taken for granted that women and men are equal.

Growing up and working just outside a small town in a primarily rural county, I didn't realize how steeped in sexism it was until I spent enough time in Chapel Hill to see the difference.

It is not a big leap to compare this situation to that of racial minorities.

Small communities often have no lack of racism, which is regularly reinforced from both sides in a seemingly endless cycle.

On this campus, however, a plethora of cultural groups exists and flourishes.

And as some folks continue their search for reasons to justify racial rage, they neglect to notice the way their fellow students of varying races interact.

It is no secret that the storms of racial conflict sometimes continue to rage in America, just as women seem to maintain the status of not-quite-equal to men.

But UNC, a community made up of students free to associate as they will, is not a microcosm of the nation. It is evidence that harmony is possible.

Perhaps the greatest threats to good race relations at UNC are institutional.

They divide people by race even as diverse students come together.

Equality does not exist in the segregated nature of recruitment, freshman orientation programs and the Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History.

Racial preference in the admissions process fosters self-doubt in excellent scholars.

The rhetoric used in debating seemingly innocuous issues like the names of buildings and roads has become racially divisive.

The names of some campus buildings — the oldest of which were built by slave hands — do, without a doubt, reflect the past rule of a white, aristocratic elite, just as the headstones in the old cemetery reflect the legacy of a segregated history.

But these reminders of the past and of lingering racism in American society do not make UNC racist.

They highlight the ability of Carolina students of all races to triumph over the legacy and influence of prejudice.

Contact Deb McCown, editor of the Carolina Review, at [bugpower@email.unc.edu](mailto:bugpower@email.unc.edu).