

BOARD EDITORIALS

COURAGEOUS CHOICE

Chancellor Moeser did well to retire a controversially named award, although UNC should not feel pressured to alter its buildings' names.

Chancellor James Moeser showed a good amount of courage in his decision to retire the Cornelia Phillips Spencer Bell Award, which had honored achievements by women at the University. His action prevented the further use of an award that future recipients would have had to consider rejecting.

During the past year Cornelia Phillips Spencer's legacy has been parsed and questioned, and many have found the views she held to be morally objectionable enough to provoke a re-evaluation of an award given in her name. Winners of the honor might have been placed in an uncomfortable position if the decoration remained in place.

Controversy sparked when Yonni Chapman, a graduate student in the Department of History, initiated a campaign to bring some darker aspects of the University's history to light. Termed a segregationist, Spencer has come under particular scrutiny for her Reconstruction-era activities and displays of discrimination.

Although the examination of the University's past that stemmed from Chapman's explorations has been worthwhile, it's unfortunate that the award itself became sullied and that potential recipients began to feel pressured to reject the honor.

There's no doubt that it would have become, as Moeser told The (Raleigh) News & Observer, "an award with an asterisk beside its name."

The University's logic works well to explain why the award could not have served its original purpose — Moeser's move was about the integrity of the award and those it honored. It was not a form of historical revisionism or whitewashing.

Spencer was certainly an outstanding advocate for higher education, but she also was undoubtedly an active white supremacist.

These aspects of Spencer's life, taken in the context of history, can be left for individuals to judge — Moeser took a respectable position by professing

regard for Spencer as a person while rejecting her ringing of the South Building bell.

That action has been remembered widely as her celebration of the University's reopening in 1875 after a political shutdown.

But — as critics have argued — the action also can be interpreted as celebrating the return of white supremacist control of N.C. higher education and politics.

Spencer's descendants have called for the University to consider renaming campus landmarks, such as Spencer Residence Hall and Saunders Hall. But the reasons for any such action likely would not be consistent with those that led to the retirement of the Bell Award.

No one is burdened by a building's name, whereas future Bell Award recipients would have faced undue attention regarding their choice of whether or not to accept the prize.

There are many figures in the history of the University whose actions can be scrutinized or criticized. But none of the landmarks that carry on their legacies would bring recurring controversy each year as the Bell Award could have.

In putting an end to the prize, the University isn't making a statement about Cornelia Phillips Spencer. It's preventing members of the University community from carrying the undue burden of an award now sullied by questions of character.

Although the Bell Award is now defunct, establishing another distinction for women is an important goal to consider. Women make essential contributions to the campus community, and their work should not lose the polish of recognition because of the circumstances surrounding the Bell Award.

The administration has made a careful and ultimately correct choice for the future of a University that must never lose sight of its commitment to justice and equality. And UNC made that decision without compromising the integrity of its history.

AID IN A TRAGIC TIME

Members of the University community should look for ways to assist relief efforts in areas damaged by and still reeling from the tsunami.

Last summer, I took a one-month trip to Malaysia and Thailand. I spent several days on the Malaysian island of Penang before traveling up through the southern portion of Thailand toward Bangkok.

Several months later, I read about the western coasts and islands of these countries being ravaged by tsunami waves traveling at hundreds of miles per hour.

One man commented to The Canadian Press that "Phuket is gone, Krabi is gone, Phi Phi Island is gone, so much we love is all gone." It sent chills down my spine.

These were places about which other travelers had spoken so highly. And these places weren't even hit as hard as some other areas, such as the Indonesian province of Sumatra, which was particularly close to the epicenter of the massive earthquake that caused the tsunami.

I can barely imagine what those who are struggling to survive in the Asian wastelands and those who lost loved ones to the waves are going through. From Sri Lanka to India to the Maldives to Myanmar and even all the way to Africa, the level of tragedy is unprecedented. There are people in our own community who have had to deal with the unspeakable.

All I can say is that I feel for them.

Although the national media traditionally does little justice to international news events, they have covered this disaster as extensively as the U.S. military's ongoing struggle in Iraq and the daily grind of Washington, D.C., politics. That's a good thing. The state of emergency won't be over for a long while, and it has to stay on people's minds.

The outpouring of aid coming from every corner of the world, including the United States, has reaffirmed the concept of goodwill toward your fellow

man. But relief efforts have been plagued with logistical problems and money and materials at times have not moved in the right direction.

One thing is crystal clear: We can't allow the flow of money and supplies to weaken. Every member of the UNC community who hasn't already done so should think about giving to the organizations that are working so hard to provide some relief to devastated areas.

Major news sources have shown us horrifying pictures of washed-up bodies and devastated beachfronts. But the enormous loss of life, as striking as it is and should be, is only part of the dilemma.

Tourism — a vital industry in many of the affected areas — has been dealt a major blow. Countless travelers from across the globe have found their way to Southeast Asia every year. Though the economic fallout to these countries has yet to be measured, their financial stability is in peril.

They need all the economic support they can get. There are plenty of prime opportunities — from local groups collecting money to international relief organizations — for members of the University community to show support for those people who are still fighting disease, hunger and loss of shelter overseas.

It's impossible to be oversaturated with reports about the tsunami's shocking after-effects. Helping out goes beyond preserving the image of the United States among the rest of the international community.

It goes beyond culture, religion and politics. In this case, the maxim that "every little bit helps" absolutely applies.

Sadly, it's inevitable that more people are going to die. But each extra dollar that is donated will help to ensure that the death toll is as low as possible and that these areas will have what they need to get back on their feet.

ELLIOTT DUBE
EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR

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 2004-05 DTH editor decided not to vote on the board and not to write board editorials.

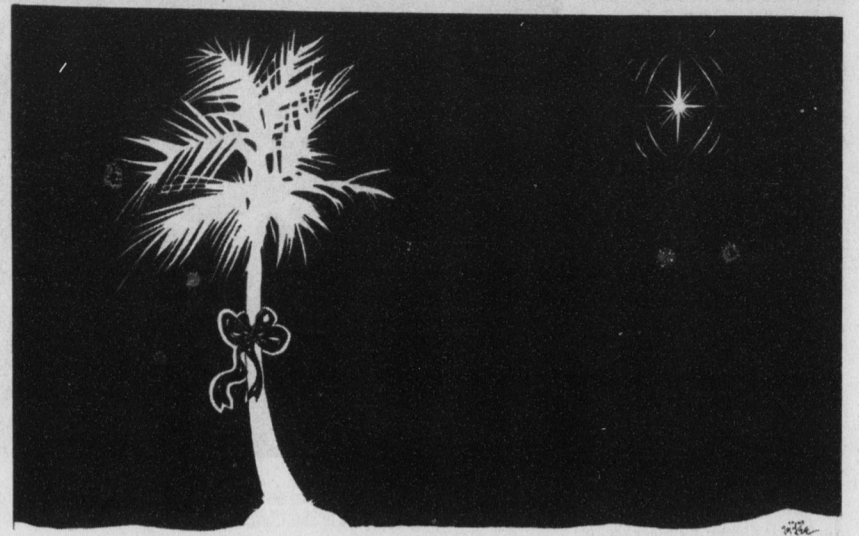
ON THE DAY'S NEWS

"Don't brood on what's past, but never forget it either."

THOMAS H. RADDALL, CANADIAN AUTHOR AND HISTORIAN

EDITORIAL CARTOON

By Philip McFee, pip@email.unc.edu



COMMENTARY

The confessions of a 'white' black student at Carolina

During a recent dinner conversation, one of my closest friends said, "The verdict is in. I'm sad to report that you are no longer black."

"No longer black?" I immediately asked. I quickly looked at my hands to make sure that I had not unknowingly undergone a Michael Jackson-esque transformation, but I quickly realized that my skin was the same color it had always been.

"People don't think of you as black," she continued. "In fact, you're practically white."

It was one of the most confusing moments of my life. My friend's revelation perplexed me. I couldn't understand the fact that people saw me as not being black, and even as "white." I tried to make sense of the matter in different ways.

First, I looked at my family. Both of my parents are black. Both have beautiful brown skin, broad noses and the most unique hair I have ever seen. They were also born in historic times for blacks. Both lived through Jim Crow segregation, and my mom even picked cotton.

I then looked at my own experiences. Raised in Alabama, one of the most segregated areas of the nation, I quickly learned that race was a big factor in American society, and that I was not in the majority.

I attended subpar, all-black schools and grew up on a dirt road in an all-black neighborhood. I was called "nigger" more times than I can count, and when I did move to a racially mixed community, none of my white neighbors would even speak to me.

I went to a racially mixed boarding school and faced even more problems because of my race. Staff members and administrators discriminated against



DERWIN DUBOSE
FROM THE DIRT ROAD

students of color, and I received a death threat after standing up against hate speech.

Even at Carolina, I have had highly insensitive remarks directed at me. I was even called a drug dealer at a party last year.

To me, I was most certainly black, and our closed-minded society treated me accordingly. However, that completely contradicted my friend's report.

Still confused, I began to ask other people to weigh in on the issue. I asked friends, co-workers, professors and even campus administrators.

My conversations with these people varied. Each person had different thoughts on the issue, but all of the talks had a common thread: Most of my decisions since arriving in Chapel Hill were not "black enough."

I am in a "white" fraternity. My North Face fleece and Reef sandals are among the most heavily used articles in my wardrobe. I own all three John Mayer CDs. I chat with friends and play Frisbee on Polk Place.

My main involvement on campus has been with "white" organizations such as the Campus Y, student government, the Interfraternity Council and now The Daily Tar Heel.

Basically, I made all of the wrong choices if I was to be considered "black" at UNC.

But why is this the case? Sadly, society has dictated that certain

activities, organizations, styles of clothing and actions are "black," and that most others — especially those of the mainstream culture — are "white."

Do we have follow that edict and judge our fellow students based on racist categories? As difficult as it might be, I hope that we can start treating our fellow Tar Heels more like individuals, instead of categorizing them by prejudiced cultural norms.

I admit that I am a utopian-minded person, and I sincerely believe that we must be the change we wish to see in the world. Improving race relations begins with each individual, so I am going to start doing my part.

I am going to remain a proud brother of my IFC fraternity. I will continue to wear my North Face apparel and sandals. The DTH and Campus Y will still be part of my life. I'm going to blast "I Don't Want To Be," my favorite Gavin DeGraw track, as loudly as possible.

I am also going to renew my membership in the Black Student Movement, to write my honors thesis on the campus struggle for a black cultural center and to work to connect more African Americans to campuswide activities and organizations. I will even be relaxing with the most recent Twista CD.

To be quite honest, I am going to continue being myself, a unique individual. Maybe I can be an exemplar of what I consider common sense: People should not be made to feel bad because they are eclectic or challenge the status quo.

In fact, those are the only people who have ever made a genuine impact on society, and that's why I will be writing this column.

Contact Derwin Dubose, a junior history major, at derwin.dubose@gmail.com.

The Daily Tar Heel

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READERS' FORUM

Choice to retire Bell Award might create slippery slope

TO THE EDITOR: Now that the Cornelia Phillips Spencer Bell Award has been retired, what's next?

Chancellor James Moeser has stated that he has no plans to rename the residence hall that honors Spencer.

But is the award decision going to open the door for greater scrutiny into the lives and beliefs of other former University personalities? Even if they might have been the product of their time?

For example, it has been said that UNC alumnus and former N.C. governor Charles B. Aycock was a white supremacist.

We'd have to rename buildings from Greensboro to Greenville to Goldsboro in order to fix that legacy.

Were there male leaders who opposed women being admitted to UNC?

What if those men believed that females should be denied the opportunity to teach at the University?

To be fair, I should also ask whether there have ever been any female leaders who have said things about men that weren't very nice, or women who have used their position of power to advance an anti-male agenda.

It has only been in recent years that being openly gay or lesbian has been relatively acceptable.

Now is it possible that in our

history as a University, there has ever been an administrator that has uttered the "q-word" or some other derogatory term applicable to sexual orientation?

Were students passed over for special honors because of their perceived sexual orientation?

Should the homophobia of times past be put on trial?

I did not attend the Bell Award "community conversation," as I believe it was called, so I'm not passing judgment on the decision. I'm just curious as to where this will lead.

Is the racism that Spencer is said to have harbored in her heart so severe that it deserves singling out?

Or is there much more attention to be drawn to other figures because of the ignorance of their times?

John Heath
Graduate
Education

sized boxes of chocolate milk on a folding chair watching a TV with fuzzy reception.

I've been in Iraq since before the start of Carolina's football season — when it was regularly 115 degrees — through the Tar Heels' valiant effort in the Continental Tire Bowl.

I will still be here right until Carolina prepares for the ACC Men's Basketball Tournament.

You have no idea how much good it did for me to see Carolina win as we endure the harsh, cold winds of winter in the Iraqi desert.

Maj. Rob Bracknell
U.S. Marine Corps
Class of 1992

ONLINE

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Maryland shellacking helps morale for troops in desert

TO THE EDITOR: I just watched Carolina beat Maryland soundly on the Armed Forces Network as I serve with the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing in Al Asad, Iraq.

I wish I had been in the Dean Dome or on Henderson Street with a beer or two and Woody Durham in the background.

Alas, my only option was two kid-

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