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I AM LEGEND, HEAR ME ROAR  
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## The next virus to infect the Internet

Viruses are scary things. They infect a host cell, then leave the infected cell to contaminate others. That is the principle behind viral marketing and we, as consumers, need to be careful not to lose sight of propaganda masquerading as entertainment.

Despite attempts by multiple people to explain football to me, I will tune into the Super Bowl this year purely for the commercials.

Next week, when fans are discussing the results of the game, I'll be talking about the premiere of the next Pepsi commercial. But what if instead of using it as fodder for water-cooler conversation, I sent out links to the video over the listservs that I'm a member of (sorry "seniors08")? Companies can reach many more consumers through the Internet than by other means, which is why viral marketing online works much better than word of mouth.

Hotmail is generally accepted as having the first successful viral marketing campaign. By putting an ad for their free e-mail at the end of every item sent from their site, they greatly increased the number of people signing up for their accounts.

But viral advertisements seem to work best when they don't even look like advertisements.

Taxbrain.com faked the theft of a race car for an advertising campaign. The video footage was so convincing that they got more than \$1 million in free advertising when it was aired repeatedly on ESPN, among other networks, as a real news story.

Then there's the "Will It Blend?" series of videos. Blendtec spent \$50 on the initial campaign, posting YouTube videos of household odds and ends being torn to pieces in their blenders. They've since blended golf balls, glow sticks and an iPhone. The videos boosted their company sales by 43 percent when they debuted in 2006.

Children often don't understand the persuasive nature of advertising, causing concern for parents and, in some countries, a ban on commercials geared toward kids younger than 12. Adults are presumably able to handle this propaganda, but it becomes harder to see these videos as advertisements when they are encroaching on the territory of entertainment. This is especially true for the massive campaign for "Cloverfield."

"Cloverfield" has been referred to as the first film of the YouTube generation partly because of the shaky camera work and the intense online advertising.

I personally think that "Cloverfield" is one of the best movies I've seen in a long time (take that "Juno"), but I've heard a lot of people say that it didn't live up to the hype. You have to admit, there's a lot of hype to live up to.

At least seven of the film's characters have MySpace pages, which allow for character development outside of the 85 minutes of non-stop action and tugs on your heart-strings like no Hallmark commercial could. There is a video blog belonging to one of the characters and, of course, there are countless fan sites to help keep it all straight. Not that the movie lacks coherence if you haven't visited the sites, but looking at the extras adds something to the spectacle of the thing.

Even if the film didn't meet your expectations, you have to have seen it to be able to say that, which is the goal of the hype, after all. All of these Web sites coupled with the vague trailers and popularity of producer J.J. Abrams led to a \$41 million opening weekend, the best January opening for a film ever.

So go ahead and discuss how funny it is to imagine Mr. T as a Night Elf or how the Geico spots have gone downhill since the gecko's accent went from upper-class British to cockney. Just remember that ads can't replace your favorite TV shows. And the best part is that your shows don't ask you to buy anything. All they ask is for you to watch the commercials.

EDITORIAL CARTOON By Mason Phillips, mphil@email.unc.edu



## The Price is right

Congress should revamp primary election system

After serving on two separate commissions in 1984 and in 2008 to examine and rewrite the rules on Democratic presidential nominations, U.S. Rep. David Price, D-N.C., fears that the current primary system needs more than a little fixing. And he's right.

Price proposed a new system Monday in which five state primaries would be held each week for a period of 10 weeks starting in early March and ending mid-way through May.

His proposal also espouses the revamping of public financing rules. In suggesting the alterations, he hopes to lessen the role of big money in the evaluation and success of candidates.

Currently, these traditional electoral bellwethers commence in Iowa and New Hampshire in early January and end in Montana, New Mexico and South Dakota in early June.

With an early primary comes

increased focus on your state. Therefore, states have attempted to "front load," pushing their primaries earlier and earlier on the calendar to gain influence and attention from the candidates.

Because New Hampshire has a state law requiring its primary occur first and Iowa has a bloated sense of self importance, the campaigning season gradually balloons, placing less wealthy candidates at a disadvantage.

After Super Tuesday, when more than 20 states hold primaries, the process hobbles slowly, painfully and expensively to the June finish, draining less financially stable candidates of funds needed for eventual victory.

Condensing the primaries, as Price suggests, diminishes the gargantuan role of money in the primary process, and in doing so could revitalize the importance of competence on the issues — something that generally is rather important.

Price's proposal is a viable solution to the primary problem, but his assertion that Iowa and New Hampshire should continue to perform the influential opening acts of the theatrical primary process is still flawed.

For the roughly 295 million of you living outside of these two states, Iowa's population is 94.6 percent white, while New Hampshire's is 95.8 percent.

These states could not possibly be any less representative of the increasingly diverse United States population, and they play disproportionately crucial roles in the nomination process.

As such, Price's proposal should include some sort of measure to balance the influence of states in the primary process, such as total randomization.

Price's plan is a welcome solution to a chronic primary problem, providing the fairest possible system of candidate nominations.

## The wrong kind of tax cut

Sales tax holiday proposal ignores states' rights

Not paying sales tax is a nice break. And while the N.C. sales tax of 6.75 percent might not seem like much, on \$500 of textbooks you'd save \$33.75. That's enough to buy 225 blue books.

In an attempt to stimulate the economy and boost spending, U.S. Sen. Richard Burr, R-N.C., pitched a plan in Congress that would establish a nationwide sales tax holiday for 10 days in April.

As appealing as a week without sales tax would be — especially one right before tax time that includes two weekends — sales tax is, and needs to remain, solely the right of individual states.

Burr wants his plan to be considered as an alternative to the bill that was passed by the House on Tuesday which would send rebate checks of \$600 to individuals and \$1,200 to families.

While we applaud Burr for promoting discussion and a free flow of ideas, a tax-free week isn't the best idea to help stave off a recession.

Most states rely on sales taxes as a source of revenue, and they need the power to decide what rate to charge on commercial items. Sales tax brought in \$498,672,598 to North Carolina in April alone last year, and the amount collected in April has risen every year since 2001.

Although the states that participate in the holiday would be reimbursed 60 percent of their lost revenue by the federal government, Washington shouldn't have anything to do with their right to charge sales tax.

And even with some compensation by the federal government, 10 days of sales tax is a lot to lose.

On the plus side, no state would be forced to participate in this holiday; under the proposal, the 45 states that have sales tax would have to voluntarily buy in for the bill to pass.

But if it weren't for the fact that the resolution is nonbinding it would be entirely unconstitutional, and though it isn't officially obligatory, if it passes, political pressure would make it implicitly required.

Even if it was the job of the federal government to regulate state sales tax, whether the proposed tax holiday would encourage spending is debatable at best.

North Carolina already holds an annual sales tax holiday for certain back-to-school items during the first weekend of August, from Friday through Sunday.

Many states hold a tax-free weekend, but economists argue that these sales boosters have negligible or even negative effects on retail businesses. While sales do increase on a tax-free holiday, they drop significantly in the weeks before the special holiday.

It's more likely that consumers will just shift their consumption from other weeks to the tax-free week, leaving no real effect on total expenditure.

But regardless of whether Burr's tax-free week would get more money flowing through the economy, Congress needs to stay within its bounds and not infringe on the power of the states.

## Bogus buyout

CSU shouldn't sell its college newspaper to Gannett

College papers are becoming serious business.

Gannett, the nation's largest newspaper publisher, is in talks with Colorado State University to buy its student newspaper, The Rocky Mountain Collegian, and merge it with The Coloradoan, a local newspaper owned by the company.

We have serious reservations about a major publisher buying out a college newspaper. The CSU president should leave the paper in student hands.

The deal mirrors Gannett's purchase of Florida State University's newspaper, The FSView. It's clear why Gannett wants the paper: a source of future employees, access to a desirable demographic group and low operating costs.

And for CSU administrators, the deal could help rid them of a pesky newspaper infamous for running an editorial that simply read, "Taser this ... F--- Bush."

But this isn't a win-win situation for everybody.

The deal raises concerns about potential violations of students' First Amendment rights.

If the paper is sold to Gannett, students could lose control over the paper's content, though the CSU president has said that the editorial content remaining in student control would be a requirement of any deal.

CSU officials can't exercise editorial control without the buyout because of laws protecting student press.

There is something inherently wrong with a college

newspaper being owned and run by a media conglomerate.

Student newspapers are meant to be run by students, with only minimal outside regulation. Ceding control of the paper to a publicly owned corporation with quarterly earnings goals to meet is a bad idea.

Plus, in what seems representative of the whole deal, all of the negotiations concerning the paper's future are going on behind closed doors, without any student input whatsoever.

If the university is intent on selling the paper, they should at least seek student opinion.

But inane editorials aside, the fact remains that the paper exists for the students, both for those who work for it and those who read it.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY:

"It's been a long haul ... it's something we've all believed in really passionately."

LAURA STROUD, CAROLINA FOR (JOHN) EDWARDS SECRETARY

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To read the full-length versions  
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#### Maybe coexistence can happen in the Middle East

TO THE EDITOR:

When I first heard that Palestine Week was being planned I felt immediately a sense of discomfort. Not because of the idea of having a week devoted to Palestinians, but because of its name: "Palestine."

I grew up believing that there is no such thing as "Palestine," that this place existed long ago and has now been replaced by the country I was born into — Israel.

Most of my life I believed either "Israel" or "Palestine" could exist, but the two could not coexist. My opinion has been in a transitional mode for the last few years.

Last summer in Jordan, I found a coin being sold by a vendor, dated 1939. It had the word "Palestine" written on it in English, Arabic and Hebrew. Next to the Hebrew word, it had the acronym letters of Alef and Yud, which stands for Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel). "Finally," I thought, "I found something that allows both ideas to coexist, neither canceling each other." I now wear that coin around my neck.

I decided to join the planning of Palestine Week because I wanted this week to be one of debate, discussions and arguments. And guess what? It has.

We can choose to avoid coming to the panels, or we can attend and voice our opinions. Either way, this week is going to effect change. We can be part of it or stand aside and watch it happen. I've made up my mind. Have you?

Shai Tamari  
Graduate Student  
History

#### WNBA popularity aside, a woman can be president

TO THE EDITOR:

This presidential debate has been an absolute joy to witness.

What better way to show how far our nation has come than to have both a female and black presidential candidate.

But let's stop making this election about race and gender. Let's make it about the best person for the job. I'm not here to defend one candidate over the other.

I am interested in voicing my opinion about how Mr. (Nathan) Nyanjom depicted women in (Wednesday's) column, "America not ready for Ms. President," Jan. 30). I was dumbfounded by the obnoxious headline, and I was less than amused that he decided to defend his idea by looking to the fact that the show "Commander in Chief" was canceled and "24" is still going strong; that the WNBA is not as well-supported as the NBA; or that women happen to appear on GoDaddy.com in scantily clad outfits.

How does that correlate to whether or not our country is ready for a female president?

Can I remind Mr. Nyanjom that our country has had a number of very highly accomplished, admired, intelligent and effective women who could easily run this country if given the chance.

Mr. Nyanjom, I urge you to take a closer look at the country in which you live. You might be hanging out at Hooters too much.

Paige Zinn  
Class of 1991

#### Palestine Week doesn't mean anti-Israel week

TO THE EDITOR:

On behalf of N.C. Hillel's Executive Student Board we are writing this letter to clarify that one person's views do not define the Jewish community.

In direct response to (Ben) Packer's letter to the editor Tuesday ("Column didn't clearly show situation in West Bank," Jan. 29), we disagree that "anything pro-Israel or pro-Jewish" must be left out of Palestine Week. Judaism must be one religion, but it is an umbrella for a diversity of opinions on spirituality, life — and Israel.

For many, the Holy Land is synonymous with conflict and strife. Not all Jews agree with every action of the Israel government, but dialogue about Israel's policies is in fact encouraged by the emphasis placed on discussion and critical thought in the Jewish tradition.

The conflict in Israel and Palestine is a deeply poignant issue. Combating it with hatred and inflammatory language is the antithesis of what an institute of higher education like UNC stands for.

Learning cannot happen when the lines of communication are obstructed by hate: Peace will follow mutual understanding. Palestine Week exemplifies this by presenting a sometimes-overlooked aspect of the conflict.

Today N.C. Hillel and SPEAC are co-sponsoring a falafel "Friendship Lunch." All interested in promoting dialogue and collaboration between student groups on campus are welcome to join us from noon to 2 p.m. at N.C. Hillel (210 W. Cameron Ave.).

Elizabeth Bernold  
President  
N.C. Hillel

Allison Rose  
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N.C. Hillel

#### We've given John Edwards no reason to return to UNC

TO THE EDITOR:

In response to the editorial on John Edwards coming back to UNC ("Look homeward, John," Jan. 28), I have a piece of advice for him — don't.

Clearly he cannot win on this campus. He starts a poverty center, and he gets criticized because he is covertly campaigning for the 2008 nomination.

He runs for the Democratic nomination, and the very little coverage that he gets from campus media is negative (see James Edward Dillard and Carla Babb).

I love this university, but it hasn't given him any reason to return. My suggestion to Edwards: Spend some time with your family, buy a house in New Orleans, get to work on the Ninth Ward and prove the cynics wrong.

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### The Daily Tar Heel

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