



NATHAN NYANJOM
A DIFFERENT ANGLE
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Reality isn't found by looking at a screen

Cash or check. Paper or plastic. To accept or not accept that new Facebook request — life is filled with choices. Contrary to these mindless decisions — reject the friend — many of the choices in our lives pit a real option against one that is seemingly realistic, and we make the mistake of picking the superficial latter, opting for a sports analyst's opinion over our own or basing our impression of camping on the events of "Survivor."

Despite being enticed by these realistic, advertised alternatives, we must stay real.

In large part the luxury of choice has been brought on by technological advancements that never seem to stop. It was the invention and perfection of the gasoline engine and airplane that now give us several options in deciding how to travel, and Al Gore's Internet now allows us to use the time increment of seconds when communicating with people on the other side of the world.

That place, I'll have you know, is actually off the west coast of Australia — not China.

Today concludes the first full week of Lent, a time when many people, for reasons either religious or ethical, give up something of daily importance for a period of 40 days.

I gave up soda. Mitt Romney gave up. I challenge each and every person reading this column to give up "reality" and take on the real.

When it comes to food, we satisfy our hunger not with the Food Network but with Bojangles. And while this might be a no-brainer, we fail to make the same choice when it comes to music entertainment: The decision of whether to spend a two-hour break playing Guitar Hero or learning how to play a real, actual acoustic guitar has become just that — a decision.

Although both forms of entertainment allow us escape for a time from the topics of American government and chemistry, the YouTube age that we live in has come to appreciate one's ability to press five colored notes just as much as the skilled finger work of Jimi Hendrix, and Guitar Hero tournaments are becoming more numerous than open houses on college campuses.

I won't even begin to talk about air guitar.

It's become more impressive to witness a Johnny "green-button-demigod" Johnson than it is to see a Taylor "G-chord-but-that's-about-it" Roger, and that needs to be changed. Chances are good that the second guy is a more well-rounded human being, plus he has two first names.

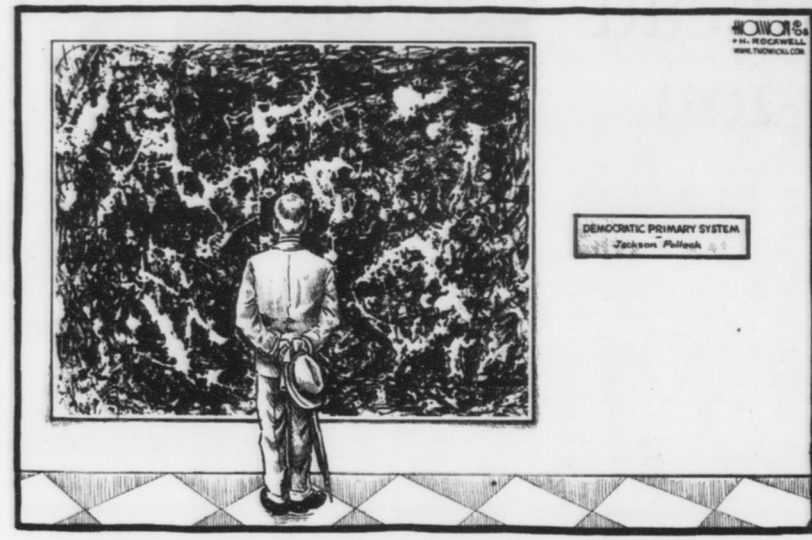
In response to those handful of e-mails we receive each year from the Carolina Athletic Association, we have become more familiar with the word "Unfortunately" than "Congratulations." What is even more unfortunate, however, is the decision made by those receiving congratulatory e-mails to forgo their luck, opting out of witnessing a victory in a less-than-desirable nosebleed seat in favor of one on a sofa in front of a television wider than a theater stage.

We would never substitute a ticket for a video game entitled "Being at a UNC Game," and while this option might be fictitious, the "better seat" of a sofa would leave one without the anticipation that time outs provide or to feel the vibration of the seat beneath you as the crowd and band reach full audible capability: They'd be watching a Geico commercial and reaching for another slice of pizza.

"Reality" needs to be passed up. Instead of talking to friends online about the day, do it in person at a restaurant. Valentine's Day will facilitate this face-to-face, real communication, but the rest of the year should, as well.

After all, our fathers didn't woo our mothers with Guitar Hero. They used guitars of their own. Or Barry Manilow.

EDITORIAL CARTOON By Terrence Nowicki, The Western Front



Standing for students

Bowles makes right call tying textbooks to tuition

If we didn't know any better, we'd say the universities are in cahoots with the textbook publishers. After one year under a new textbook policy designed to cut costs for students, UNC-system President Erskine Bowles isn't satisfied with the results.

Last week Bowles repeated his ultimatum to campuses: Control textbook costs or the Board of Governors won't approve tuition and fee increases.

We applaud Bowles for taking a strong stance on cutting costs and generally standing up for students.

While we're sure many campuses will complain about tuition increases being tied to controlling textbook costs, we say it's perfectly fair.

The university itself doesn't have to worry about textbook costs. That's a price borne primarily by the students.

For the students, however, textbooks just augment tuition costs. So when universities don't take steps to control textbook costs and continue to push tuition through the roof as

they've done in recent years, the cost to students skyrockets.

Smart students who are considering costs when they look at colleges will include textbooks in those estimates.

It's therefore to each university's benefit to do what it can to limit textbook costs. Not only does it help keep actual costs to students lower, it makes a nice selling point to prospective applicants.

While publishers releasing new editions of textbooks every year doesn't help anything, there's still a lot universities can do to help keep textbook costs to a minimum.

While Bowles is pretty much our hero right now, the 56.7 percent of UNC professors who submitted their textbook orders late last year are not.

Late textbook orders mean the bookstores have a reduced selection on the used book market, so fewer used books are available for students, thus driving up the overall cost.

It's just not that difficult to submit a textbook order. Professors can do it online

from the comfort of their living rooms while kicking back with a Diet Coke and a showing of "Masterpiece Theater."

The textbook plan adopted by the BOG last year also included a mandatory textbook buyback program for introductory classes.

Most campuses, however, implemented more of a pilot program, choosing what qualified as an introductory course and keeping the program relatively small.

At UNC, for instance, only about 50 classes had a guaranteed book buyback.

And while we're sure that helps a fair number of students, particularly freshmen taking more general education classes, the fact still remains that most classes are not introductory classes.

Luckily, UNC-system students have Bowles to advocate for their interests. The Board of Trustees sure isn't doing it.

Of course, if textbook controls have to be in place before tuition can be raised next year, we bet the BOT will be all for it.

Another brick in the wall

GA should raise dropout age but allow for exceptions

It looks like a larger proportion of North Carolina's youth are starting to agree with Pink Floyd — they don't need no education.

A report released Thursday reveals a disturbing trend in N.C. high schools: More students are dropping out before obtaining their diploma.

A total of 5.24 percent of North Carolina's high school student body dropped out in 2006-07, an increase of 6 percent over last year's numbers.

Recognizing this as a problem, state educators are pushing the General Assembly to raise the minimum dropout age from 16 to 18. Their defense is that 77 percent of dropouts fit into this age bracket.

The legislature should step in and pass the minimum age increase. It's an overdue reform.

These days, failing to earn a high school diploma is the equivalent of securing a lifetime

at McDonald's, if you're lucky.

In the modern economy, the standard requirement for education is on the rise, with the university baccalaureate degree becoming the key to a decently paying job, just as the high school diploma was 50 years ago. Idly standing by while children handicap their job marketability at 16 is socially irresponsible.

While some people argue that raising the age requirement is pointless because you can't force kids to learn, at the very least the state can make it a little harder for them to ruin their lives.

Take it from another angle: These kids are making life-altering decisions at 16. Now think of the quality of decisions made at that age. Were you mature enough to understand the implications of your actions on the next few decades of your life? Survey says: no.

There also are social effects felt by the rest of us. Medicaid

and prison costs from these dropouts amount to \$169 million a year in North Carolina. Keeping these people in school is good for the budget.

It's true that some people, due to events outside their control, are forced to drop out in order to provide for their families. This is something the GA needs to take into account and provide for when rewriting the laws.

As such, the GA should permit exceptions for students with verified parental permission.

Regardless, children are making decisions at 16 that affect the rest of their lives. Forcing them to delay that decision might not make them all graduate, but it will give them time to reconsider their educational options before making that decision.

It's time for the GA to get with the times and fix the legislation. The state as a whole will benefit from keeping young adults in the school. So do it for the kids.

Be cool; stay in school

PR campaign for middle schoolers won't be effective

Education officials across the state teamed up last week to talk about possible solutions to North Carolina's increasing high school dropout rate.

One of their proposed solutions included the creation of a public relations campaign to hammer into students the importance of education for their future career options.

According to Jim Phillips, the chairman of the UNC-system Board of Governors, the program would specifically target those awkward youngsters known as middle schoolers.

When all's said and done, public relations campaigns targeted at students will have a hard time being successful. Sure, we've all heard the phrase, "Don't be a

fool, stay in school." But when was the last time you heard a kid say, "Wow, you're right, I shouldn't be a fool" just because they saw a cheesy poster?

Officials said one of the best public relations approaches they can take is to utilize school space because there is a captive audience for poster campaigns.

Basically it's a pitch to stay in school advertised in school. Except the kids who are in school don't need someone telling them to stay in school; it's the kids skipping class at the local 7-Eleven who need the guidance.

Put the posters up next to the Slurpee machine. That way, when kids get brain freeze and have a moment of self-fulfillment, they can look to the poster and realize their life suddenly

has meaning: higher education.

It was noted that the campaign would need to involve up-to-date and "down wit it" media avenues.

State Superintendent June Atkinson said the campaign should utilize the medium she jokingly called "MyFace."

If education officials decide to use mainstream media (e.g., MySpace, Facebook, YouTube), they are going to have a hard time getting kids to look at it unless it features scandalous pictures of their friends or an awkward nerdy kid doing something embarrassing on camera.

While the school district should not sit back and watch dropout rates continue to rise, we doubt a public relations campaign will get the job done.

QUOTE OF THE DAY:

"It just happens to be a hot spot for us, which we try to keep an eye on."

KENNETH LENNON, COMMUNITY SERVICES OFFICER FOR NORTHSIDE, WHERE A MAN WAS SHOT AND KILLED TUESDAY

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To read the full-length versions
VISIT <http://dailytarheelpublic.wordpress.com>
Post your own response to a letter, editorial or story online.
VISIT www.dailytarheel.com/feedback

Bake sale in the Pit was sexist and discriminatory **Illegal immigrants should not get resident tuition**

TO THE EDITOR:
So, I was leisurely strolling through the Pit (Monday) when I saw a sign for cookies. It was about lunchtime, and I figured I would buy one to help out a student organization.

When I walked up to the table, a young lady proudly stated, "That's right, cookies are 75 cents for women and \$1 for the guys!" I later found out that this sort of thing is apparently called an equality bake sale. I am from rural North Carolina, and up until now I have never heard of such sales.

I decided to look up some facts online and found that, on average, for every dollar a man makes, a woman makes about 88 cents.

These sales are apparently used to raise awareness and possibly to equal out the pay-wage differences.

The thing I still cannot seem to get my mind around is this one little thing: Isn't this "equality" bake sale illegal? Is this not an organization discriminating against males simply based on the assumption that they are males? Since when has discrimination become OK if one believes they are being discriminated against? You'll have to forgive me for getting so up in arms about this whole thing, but I have apparently been living under the incorrect assumption that such things are NOT allowed to take place in the land of the free.

Oh, and just so you know, I did not buy a cookie.

Lance Dunlap
Freshman
Undecided

Ban on driving would be better than smoking ban

TO THE EDITOR:
Before the smoking ban, one would perhaps walk by a few sporadic smokers a day on campus.

However, common sense suggests that in the two seconds that it takes to walk past a smoker, it is highly unlikely that the secondhand smoke would be detrimental to one's health.

Nevertheless, the University has decided that it must be obsessively protective of the health of its students, faculty, staff, etc.

In consideration of this, I propose a new policy that would ban cars within 100 feet of buildings.

There's no such thing as a "right to drive." Driving is a behavior, not a condition of birth, and it isn't constitutionally protected. Courts often find in favor of people who get hit by a car in accidents.

Policies like this aren't intended to punish drivers or make them quit. Their intent is to protect pedestrians from being injured or killed in an accident.

Though it is well known that driving is dangerous, car accidents still killed more than 45,800 people in 2005, including 6,200 pedestrians.

Additionally the amount of carbon dioxide emitted by cars has had an untold effect on the environment, contributing to global warming.

If everyone rode a bike or took the bus to campus instead, it would be of great benefit to all of us.

Lynda Yang
Senior
Computer Science

TO THE EDITOR:
From a practical standpoint — I'd even go so far as to say a constitutional standpoint — the debate over whether or not illegal immigrants deserve in-state tuition is absolutely absurd.

Illegal, undocumented, whatever term you choose to describe them, the fact is that they are not in compliance with legal directives.

The United States is a nation of laws and, as such, should not be expected to provide special treatment to those individuals who break these laws.

I am a resident of North Carolina, but I have a number of close friends at UNC who pay considerably higher out-of-state tuition.

What's more, the University (just passed) a \$1,250 increase in tuition for non-North Carolina residents.

Most of those students come from honest, law-abiding parents who, as citizens, pay taxes at every level, including in their home state.

How can we possibly demand more money of them while handing what amounts to an educational discount to immigrants who not only pay no taxes, they aren't even obeying the law?

Proponents of this ridiculous concept of in-state tuition for illegal immigrants, noble though they might appear, miss the central point — these individuals have, by their very presence here, broken the law.

As such, there can be no justification for offering them special benefits, especially when our own citizens struggle to afford public education.

Ryan Collins
Freshman
Political Science, Economics

Someone needs to occupy empty Smith Center seats

TO THE EDITOR:
According to the box score, there were only 20,767 people at Sunday night's game. The Smith Center seats 21,750.

Now, I am not that good at math, but I pulled out my TI-3003 and determined that there were 983 people (students, alumni) who could have been at the game who weren't.

Just wondering why this is happening at an ACC game. I hope this is not a problem with the student section but a problem with the "wine and cheese" section.

Seriously, can we put our degrees together and come up with a solution that allows students to put a little effort into getting basketball tickets?

This doesn't seem to be a problem at any other school other than UNC, and frankly all of us students are sick and tired of this crap every year.

There should be no reason for a thousand empty seats in the Smith Center whatsoever.

Ali Mehri
Graduate Student
Pharmacy

The Daily Tar Heel

Established 1893,
114 years
of editorial freedom

SPEAK OUT

WRITING GUIDELINES:

- Please type: Handwritten letters will not be accepted.
- Sign and date: No more than two people should sign letters.
- Students: Include your year, major and phone number.
- Faculty/staff: Include your department and phone number.
- Edit: The DTH edits for space, clarity, accuracy and vulgarity. Limit letters to 250 words.

SUBMISSION:

- Drop-off: at our office at Suite 2409 in the Student Union.
- E-mail: to editdesk@unc.edu
- Send: to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, N.C., 27515.

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