



SARAH HODGES
FROM MY WORD PROCESSOR TO YOUR EARS
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It's time to break your habitual indifference

Everyone has bad habits. Some are innocent, like biting your fingernails or indulging in a little too much "Rock of Love II." Some, like smoking, affect the people around you. But it's the bad habits that much of American society shares that add up to have a negative impact on a global scale.

We, as a society, need to make a permanent change to help lessen our impact on the environment.

We often form habits in order to increase efficiency. If we know what step is coming up in our routine, then we don't have to waste mental energy planning our next move.

AT-LARGE COLUMNIST
Leaving the faucet running while we wash our hands or brush our teeth means turning the knob half as many times. Trashing recyclables means we don't have to check the list of acceptable items to see if number three plastics or corrugated cardboard is acceptable. While these habits save us from expending our personal energy, they also deplete the world's resources.

When news of the drought first broke, people were encouraged to change their water use habits. With the Orange Water and Sewer Authority meeting tonight to likely reduce water restrictions as reserves start to fill up, we shouldn't be tempted to fall back into wasteful habits.

Television commercials and signs throughout the area remind residents that the water restrictions are still in effect, but we've grown as tired of hearing about the drought as the local news is of telling it. We stop paying attention and want to go back to wasting water like before.

The same thing happens with global warming or energy concerns. We all know these problems exist, looming behind stories about celebrity rehab and the war in Iraq, but they're not as visible and so we ignore them. Sure we might try to carpool when we remember, but it's easy to forget when oil prices are not on the front page of the paper this week.

The problem is that most of us grew up in a society where we feel we are entitled to limitless clean water and our own car. I know I should cut my shower by about five minutes, but belting out my "American Idol" audition routine in the sauna-like temperatures is just too tempting. Some would rather hit the snooze button and drive to work than wake up 10 minutes earlier for the three-block walk to the bus stop. And many people want green lawns, spotless cars and an odorless dog to impress the neighbors.

It's these sorts of bad habits that wreak havoc on the environment and require a permanent change to American culture if we have any hope of making a difference.

We only ever think about the limits of a resource when it begins to dwindle. We only bother to stock up on things when there's a hint that they might run out.

Force of habit is a tough thing to break. Humans thrive on order and routine. So don't just break your bad habit, but form a good one to replace it. We wouldn't feel so deprived in situations like the drought if these weren't sacrifices at all, but part of our routine.

In order to form a new habit, we need to be able to commit. This is hard to do when the reason for change is not in the forefront of our minds.

We shouldn't focus on the drought as a reason to save water, but think of it as protection of a natural resource instead. Gas prices fluctuate, but pollution is a consistent reason to ride the bus instead of driving.

Soon these reasons will give way to habit and, although we started with different motivations, we'll all have the same impact.

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

OLYMPIC TORCH BEGINS JOURNEY TO BEIJING



In defense of funding

Research grants from defense companies not a problem

UNC and the Department of Defense had better take notice.

In keeping with the tradition of pointless political stunts that effect no real change, the UNC Students for a Democratic Society is investigating the relationship of the two entities.

We think it's a silly and unnecessary move. An unbiased investigation might provide marginally important information about some small projects, but we highly doubt that this will be an unbiased investigation.

A new group, the UNC Coalition Against the War, is tagging along with SDS on this little adventure.

The two student groups are planning to investigate the links between the government agencies and the University before mobilizing in the fall.

But UNC doesn't actually do very much research for the department or the military.

The defense funding that the University receives is largely made up of grants for which individual professors applied, and professors' freedom to seek funding from any group they see fit is not a question of ethics, but of intellectual freedom.

Additionally, this is unlike other cases where the University has cut financial ties to avoid contributing to violence around the world. There isn't a clear campus consensus about the merits of the war, unlike the universal condemnation of the events in Darfur or South Africa under Apartheid.

Plus, boycotting these sources of funding would hurt the University without doing the government any significant harm, as the department would simply find another university willing to do the research.

While there's nothing inherently wrong with an investigation, the information isn't

really all that tough to find or all that scandalous.

The defense department and all other defense-related groups sponsored less than \$11 million of research, which is about 1.8 percent of all the sponsored research UNC conducted.

The vast majority of the projects in question are more technical than martial. SDS should check out research.unc.edu, where anyone can figure out how much different groups spent for research.

We fail to see how looking at how to create better virtual reality simulators is an evil plot to assassinate Iraqi civilians.

We think that SDS and this new coalition could be useful, though, if they'd give it a shot.

Instead, they should publicize different presidential candidates' stances on the war, work to help displaced Iraqis or try to compile or find quantitative research on student opinion of the war.

No vacancy

Prison overcrowding will take two-pronged solution

N.C. legislators face the difficult task of finding a solution to prison overcrowding that doesn't jeopardize public safety by putting dangerous criminals back on the street.

According to the N.C. Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, N.C. prisons are projected to run out of space this year, a reality that could strain already tight state resources.

When balancing concerns about the costs of expanding prison facilities with public safety, government officials should use a combination of short-term and long-term approaches to the problem of prison overcrowding in North Carolina.

Prison overcrowding is a nationwide dilemma stemming from tough anti-crime policies enacted in the 1980s that have reduced crime rates but have steadily increased prison populations nationwide.

The Pew Center on the States reported in February that for the first time in U.S. history one in every 100 Americans is

behind bars and that the U.S. now has the largest prison population in the world, eclipsing that of Russia and China.

While the implications of increased incarceration rates are a much-debated subject, one obvious problem is in figuring out how North Carolina will meet the increased demand for prison facilities, a considerable feat in itself made even more challenging by the state's limited finances.

We believe that a multi-faceted approach combining long- and short-term solutions to prison overcrowding is the most effective approach.

There is clearly an immediate need to directly address prison overcrowding. Reduced sentences for convicted felons pose a serious threat to public safety and are not the solution.

The most obvious way the state can tackle this problem in the short term is to build more prisons or expand existing prison facilities.

However, this is certainly not the most cost-effective solution and will create a huge financial

headache for legislators.

In the long term, it is in the state's best interest to consider solutions that will not only be less financially burdensome for taxpayers, but also reduce recidivism rates.

Pennsylvania legislators, who are facing similar prison overcrowding issues, are considering a bill that would give nonviolent offenders an opportunity to shorten their sentence if they complete treatment programs and receive good performance reports.

Sentencing statistics show that this kind of approach can reduce crime rates and save states money. A whopping 84 percent of the increase in state and federal prison incarcerations since 1980 were nonviolent offenders, and one-third of the increase was from drug offenders.

While North Carolina need not necessarily consider the exact same proposition, it should take heed of a good idea that addresses both short- and long-term solutions to prison overcrowding.

Stop the slipping

Decals a terrible idea, should be permanently abolished

Even for the most talented and successful teams in college basketball, the journey to cutting down the nets in the Final Four can be slippery and perilous, like navigating an icy mountain road in an '82 station wagon.

However, as UNC experienced in the RBC Center last weekend, there was a new and dangerous stumbling block on the road to tournament success.

Luckily, the "daggum things" — as Roy Williams so aptly called them — won't be a problem for the rest of the tournament.

Extraordinarily large NCAA decals superimposed over host arenas' midcourt logos sent athletes careening to the deck, nearly causing injury and pricking the nerves of coaches

and fans.

Fortunately, the courts at the regional sites and the Final Four weren't scheduled to get decals. In its post-tournament review, we hope the NCAA gets rid of the idea for future seasons, too.

Part of what draws us all to the NCAA men's basketball championship is the intrigue, the hair-raising upsets and the utter unpredictability of each minute of action.

Sure, adding circular NCAA slip and slides at midcourt heightens tension and raises NCAA awareness, but it does so at the expense of the players who provide the entertainment, and their future careers.

During Sunday's showdown with Arkansas, Tyler Hansbrough encountered this

non-scholarship opponent face-to-face, losing his footing and nearly blowing out a knee in one of the most awkward and uncoordinated human movements since his celebration after hitting the game-winning shot against Virginia Tech in the ACC Tournament semifinals.

Had this minor slip-up ended in torn knee ligaments or a severely sprained ankle, it could have derailed UNC's tournament hopes in the most unfair way possible.

If advertising itself is that important to the NCAA, there are many other ways to do so.

Perhaps it could send a team of NCAA cheerleaders to dance, somersault and smile their way across midcourt during the countless television timeouts.

QUOTE OF THE DAY:

"There is really, no issue which concerns everyone — students or citizens — more than safety."

EVE CARSON, AT A SEPTEMBER TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Gender-neutral language won't solve key problems

TO THE EDITOR:

The article of Alice Miller ("Gender-neutral words spread," March 25) regarding use of "language that incorporates both genders ... to avoid discrimination against one sex or the other" is yet another example of the "feminization of America."

While the feminist movement has brought about many positive changes in the Western world, I am one who does not see "gendered language" as even minimally important.

"First-year student" instead of "freshman"? Does the word "freshman" conjure an image of anything other than a first-year student — devoid of either gender? How does such verbiage "encourage" (or discourage) "young women to grow up and become anything they dream to be?" I don't believe the use of terms "mailman" or "fireman" have stood as barriers to women entering those fields, nor does removal of them from the English lexicon then suddenly open the doors to usher in females.

Revise, alter or even ban any word you want, but nothing changes unless the ideology and thinking underlying those words change — it's just window dressing. "A rose by another name is still a rose."

I guess once we have redefined, reclassified and compartmentalized all of our nouns suitably, we will have satisfactorily erased gender differences and neutered our society so that we can get down to the much greater local, national and global issues facing all humans. Oh, sorry, hu-people.

C. Jean Brown
UNC Kidney Center

A legalized prostitution industry needs regulation

TO THE EDITOR:

I am extremely sympathetic to Charles Dahan's view ("Spitzer's shenanigans should be legalized," March 25) that "criminalizing prostitution only works to further marginalize a group of women in society" and agree that legalizing or decriminalizing it would be a step in the improvement of the lives of countless women.

However, Dahan has misunderstood the purpose of "contemporary progressives" who call for certain regulation of the industry. Just as the establishment of labor and workplace standards by the government is not meant to decrease demand for workers or their products, neither would the regulation of legalized prostitution be meant to discourage the patronizing of prostitutes.

Rather, just as they do in other dangerous industries, such standards would be meant to insure the safety of sex workers in a business currently plagued by "violence, rape and disease."

Dahan has an admirable concern for the condition of prostitutes, who are, after all, as human as anyone. Yet just as unregulated free trade could not maintain the living standards and safety of laborers in the years before the New Deal, neither would it help prostitutes to legalize prostitution, and then leave them to the whim of unfettered market forces.

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The Daily Tar Heel

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of editorial freedom