



ANTHONY MAGLIONE
GUEST COLUMNIST
Anthony Maglione is a junior psychology major from Lenoir.
E-MAIL: AMAG@EMAIL.UNC.EDU

It's time to find our Tar Heel spirit

“Unfortunately, you HAVE NOT been randomly selected in the lottery to receive student tickets ...”

Last school year, I read that line time and time again. I started to doubt that anyone in the Carolina Athletic Association thought it was “unfortunate” that I wasn’t going to the games. But they made up for it this basketball season; and perhaps all for the better, since this year we are making our first Final Four appearance since the 2005 National Championship team.

I got tickets to almost every home conference game — even against Duke. I had never been to a game in the rivalry before. In the upper level, I could feel the arena tremble from students jumping in the risers. By the end of the night, my voice was gone. Unfortunately, so was a piece of my heart.

After the game a mob of Carolina blue moved quietly out of the arena. Before I made it to the exit, a group of students who had been sitting near me during the game approached. They told me that I was best fan they ever cheered alongside. I was happy to receive the compliment, but it didn’t change the score.

For me, the highlight of the night was the realization that I was part of an assembly of thousands who were all passionately united around a single purpose: to support our team. But it was more than that. We wanted to be part of the team — to contribute to it in whatever way possible. And it showed.

Now that is what I call school spirit.

The next morning I was relieved to find that my voice had recovered. I also found out that a man had verbally and sexually assaulted a friend of mine the night before. It was difficult to digest. Something of such magnitude dwarfs just about anything else, be it a basketball game or an upcoming exam. These things appear trivial in the face of such an attack.

None of us wants to see a person targeted or harmed, whether the victim is a close friend, a member of the Carolina community or a complete stranger. I can only imagine that none of us would stand by and watch a person assault someone else.

Apparently, my imagination has run wild.

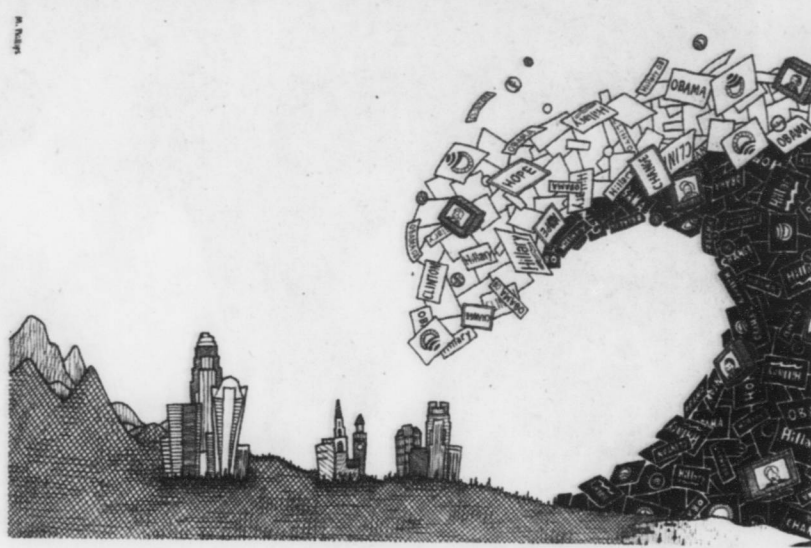
I forgot to mention that the man who assaulted my friend was a fan at the Duke game. He was a UNC student, and he hurt my friend in plain view of other fans. Students stood by and watched as a man initially groped and then cursed at my friend. He belittled her for being a woman with words I don’t want to repeat here. He threatened her throughout the remaining minutes of the game.

I understand that we might hesitate to intervene out of fear. We worry about making the situation worse and instigating physical retaliation. But no one had to intervene in that way. At any point during the attacker’s verbal tirade, someone could have left and found a security guard. That didn’t happen. We — the students, the fans — were frozen in place. We said nothing. We did nothing. And my friend suffered for it.

What if the guy was from Duke rather than UNC? Would a male student from UNC have stepped in to “defend” his schoolmate from our rival? Would someone have left to get a security guard? We don’t know.

There’s a paradox here. Thousands of students are capable of coalescing with utmost fervor around our team in the name of school unity; yet when an event of true consequence and severity befalls a member of our united community of Tar Heels, we tacitly approve of it by doing nothing. Is this what school spirit has become? Or has it always been there, hidden in our cheeks?

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



Lights out

DPS should evaluate use and repair of blue lights

A recent investigation by The Daily Tar Heel indicates that areas of campus with more blue lights have had less crime since 2005.

It also revealed, however, that the blue light system doesn’t necessarily work as well as authorities insist it does.

Given the current concerns for safety on and around campus, the Department of Public Safety needs to determine whether it’s beneficial to add or repair blue lights before doing so.

According to the DTH investigation, larceny, burglary, robbery, car theft, assault and rape crimes are most highly concentrated on North Campus, where there are fewer properly functioning blue lights than on South Campus.

The correlation between these two factors seems to strongly encourage the more widespread use of the 9-foot-tall, strobe light-bearing security devices.

Regardless of whether correlation means causality in this case, it’s clear that campus security must improve to assuage the fears of students on campus.

The study exposes a number of deficiencies in the blue light system.

Almost one-third of blue lights surveyed have literally lost their luster, changing from conspicuous bright blue to a faded yellowish tint that blends in with the surrounding environment.

And at 58 of the 71 blue lights, the researchers were unable to locate another blue light in sight, meaning an endangered caller would have difficulty maintaining communication with police while moving from one call box to the next to stay safe.

Also problematic, we can’t feasibly check to make sure the communication lines work and the call boxes will actually reach the police when used. That’s something DPS should make it

a point to do regularly itself.

There is, however, an overarching philosophical question. With cell phones so widespread, do people actually use blue lights? Or, alternately, do they act as a crime deterrent?

This information might best be garnered by a DPS survey of students. If some, even a small number, of students say that they would use call boxes or that they feel safer around them, then it’s probably worth the time and money to add new ones and fix the existing ones.

Unfortunately, both adding new call boxes and fixing decrepit ones are difficult problems because there are three separate entities responsible for varying parts of their upkeep.

Streamlining the detection and repair process, combined with information regarding use and location, would make blue lights much more effective at keeping students safe.

The waiting game

BOE should take over RHA elections when ITS allows

One would assume that the job of the Board of Elections would be to administer student elections. But that’s not true in all cases.

Unfortunately, with elections for the Residence Hall Association’s community governors, the BOE is hands-off — but it’s because Information Technology Services doesn’t want to rework the election system.

It’s clear that the board should take over the community governor elections. Since it apparently can’t be done now, the BOE and RHA need to push for it to be included in the new system, and when the time comes, Student Congress should amend the Student Code accordingly.

Should the BOE administer

the RHA elections, it wouldn’t interfere with the board’s traditional duties because the elections are held in April, after other campus elections.

Plus, the elections would undoubtedly run better under BOE guidance. That is, after all, the board’s job — elections.

Governor elections for next year’s RHA were supposed to be administered by the BOE in April, but plans fell through.

RHA President Brian Sugg said he and BOE Chairman Mitchell Capriglione agreed last semester that the board would take over the elections in exchange for RHA volunteers working polling sites at dorms for the spring election.

Capriglione said that according to ITS, the current system

would have to be reworked significantly in order to recognize the various communities.

He is, however, pushing for the capability to be included in the new election system, which should arrive along with the new Student Central sometime in 2009.

As it stands, Title VI of the Student Code, which specifies how campus elections are to be run, does not state that execution of community governor elections is the BOE’s responsibility.

Once the BOE is able to take over, however, Congress should amend Title VI to include the RHA elections.

We just hope that a year or two down the road everyone still remembers this needs to be done.

For the public good

Public policy think tank is a good idea if nonpartisan

The UNC system is in talks to create the Center for Public Policy, a think tank that would tap professors’ ideas and research about issues directly concerning the state.

Using academic research to guide public policy is an excellent idea, but there are certain inherent dangers in policy centers that must carefully be addressed before going forward.

Creating an organization for contributing academic research to the General Assembly will benefit researchers, students and the state.

If instituted correctly, a UNC-system think tank could mean increased research opportunities for professors, job placement for students and more efficient responses to problems directly concerning the state.

The potential benefits are obvious, particularly for UNC, which is slated to be the site of the center.

It would provide a means for professors to do prominent research and put it to use in government, a huge selling point when the University is courting

high-profile professors.

Also, it would allow UNC students to participate in the research, which would significantly bolster their resumes.

And at a price tag of \$1.2 million, if each of the system’s about 209,000 students puts in an equal amount, it would cost each of us about \$5.75 apiece to start.

This means the center will cost only a little more per student than the Association of Student Governments does over our four years, and it’s guaranteed to be more effective.

Plus, the role of the center fits perfectly into the charge that the UNC system has to help enhance, improve and give back to the state. Legislators will now have a clear and centralized place to turn in order to obtain research on the problems that need to be addressed, which will help to formulate more effective and better policy solutions.

However, critics have raised some legitimate questions about the neutrality of the center.

When a public institution takes on such a significant role

in policy making, it’s essential that it abstain from espousing any kind of political slant that represents a portion, rather than the entirety, of its constituents.

An advisory board is set to review public research for neutrality before it is submitted to lawmakers.

But actually putting together a board that can objectively assess the bias of the research is no easy task.

We are confident that structures can be put in place to ensure the neutrality of the center, but all questions regarding how this will be achieved must be addressed before the legislature agrees to provide funding.

We hope that after these kinks get worked out, the legislature does end up funding the center. Legislators should be as informed as possible before making important decisions, especially when they concern issues beyond their realm of expertise.

This think tank will be a great way for the University to give back to the state by keeping legislators informed.

QUOTE OF THE DAY:

“This team has continued to show that when we need to dig deeper and play better and play harder ... we do.”

MARCUS GINYARD, UNC FORWARD

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Feel strongly about something that has been printed? Post your own response to a letter, editorial or story online. VISIT www.dailytarheel.com/feedback

False information reflects underlying societal racism

TO THE EDITOR:
At roughly 11 a.m. (Friday), a campus safety e-mail alert was sent out that said a robbery took place the night before.

The alleged suspect supposedly used a weapon and demanded cash from the victim. The suspect then struck the victim and ran off into oblivion.

Here’s the best part: The suspect was described as black, 5 (foot) 10 (inches tall), in his early 20s and wearing a navy blue sweatshirt and blue jeans.

On Saturday another safety alert e-mail announced that this alleged robbery never took place and that the victim gave the police false information.

I found no amusement in this fictitious story. Particularly in light of the bigoted and racist comments going around regarding the suspects arrested in Eve Carson’s murder.

It seems like in our society, if something bad happens, you can just blame a black male and people will believe you.

This might sound radical, but I believe people who make false accusations should get the same charges that their supposed attacker would have got. For example, if someone lies about being robbed than they get the same charges as the robber would. If someone intentionally lies about being raped, then they get the same charges that a rapist would.

Maybe these types of measures will put an end to these false accusations that promote racism and reinforce stereotypes.

Gerard Anthony
Senior
Communication Studies

We all should be helping immigrants to assimilate

TO THE EDITOR:
In truth, 70 percent to 75 percent of immigrants speak English very well or well.

Immigrants who do not speak English are generally low income; nearly two-thirds of low-wage immigrant workers do not speak English proficiently.

English lessons cost time and money, two things those with little income cannot afford.

If anything, low-wage workers desperately want to learn English because it will lead to a better paying job. Waitlists for ESL classes indicate the overwhelming desire to increase fluency.

If we want to emphasize English proficiency, the only option is to make ESL classes more available.

Those like Donnie Hill (“Immigrants to America must be able to assimilate,” March 26) who are so fervent about immigrant integration might consider volunteering with one of the many immigrant-oriented organizations on campus.

Integration necessarily involves allowing immigrants to become part of our community by breaking down the barriers of fear. Responsibility for community well-being belongs to everyone.

Rachel Craft
Junior
Spanish, International Studies

Taping protests is actually to help protect protesters

TO THE EDITOR:
I think it’s a bit of an overstatement to say that having ISAAC tape the war protest was a “waste of taxpayer money,” as Billie Murray said on March 26 (“Videotaping rally was a waste of taxpayer money”).

They videotape events partially for the purpose of protecting the protesters in case they’re confronted or attacked by others or if they’re accused of damaging something. Having the government videotape your rally doesn’t mean you’re being “considered terrorists,” but that it’s smarter to have a visual record of something in case questions arise later.

I recall a similar argument arising from “dash cams” on the dashboards of police cars. They were installed because the government was worried that police were using excessive force and beating suspects. In the end the cameras did explain the origins of most wounds — they were self-inflicted by the suspects themselves, done to try to claim police brutality.

In other words the seemingly apparent purpose of police surveillance (whether it’s to record war protestors or try to catch cops who beat suspects) is usually not what the video ultimately ends up being used for.

Trent McCotter
Economics
Senior

Language should change to reflect change in society

TO THE EDITOR:
I’d like to address the letter about Gender-neutral language. (“Gender-neutral language won’t solve key problems,” March 27).

You’re right; language does not change the way we think immediately, and it won’t solve all the problems of sexism and heterosexism in our society. But this is not a case of changing language to change minds, it’s a case of changing language to reflect a change in our society.

When the word “freshman” was made up, all the entering students were men. At UNC this meant up until 1963, the year in which women were allowed to attend.

“Freshmen” identifies men as the sole attendees, and though it’s unlikely to offend anyone at a personal level, it indicates a disturbing line of thought. Other words like chairman, fireman, mailman, etc. aren’t intended as a derogatory jab at women, but they still identify men as the norm and therefore women as the other.

No, changing words to chairperson or first-year won’t change our society, but the change would reflect the transformation our society is going through in which women are able to attend college, become head of a company or deliver mail (even if they’re not getting paid the same).

The transition to gender-neutral language is meant as a revelation of a new way of thinking, not as a politically correct ‘feminization’ of the language.

Cameron Manning
Junior
Women’s Studies, Asian Studies

The Daily Tar Heel

Established 1893,
115 years
of editorial freedom

SPEAK OUT

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ERIN ZUREICK
EDITOR, 962-4086
ZUREICK@EMAIL.UNC.EDU
OFFICE HOURS:
MON, WED, FRI, 1-2 P.M.

ADAM STORCK
OPINION EDITOR, 962-0750
APSTORCK@UNC.EDU

JONATHAN TUGMAN
ASSOCIATE OPINION EDITOR, 962-0750
TUGMAN@UNC.EDU

EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS
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