

Olympics bring out activism in students



Letian Lin, who thinks the Dalai Lama is trying to separate China by mixing politics with the Olympics, shows support for the games Friday in the Pit.

BY ANITA RAO
STAFF WRITER

UNC students gathered in the Pit on Friday to collect signatures supporting the 2008 Beijing Olympics and opposing recent protests of the games.

Members of the Friendship Association of Chinese Students and Scholars plan to send the cream-colored cloth with the signatures to the organizing committee to show support for the August games.

Recent protests of the Olympic torch relay, a symbolic journey around the world, have targeted China's perceived human rights violations in Sudan and Tibet.

"We don't need to mix Olympics and politics," said Wei Luo, a UNC chemistry graduate student and president of the association. "The

Olympic Games are the world's dream and the world's game."

Journalism graduate student Amy Shirong Lu said she watched coverage of the torch relay and thought the media gave an unfair amount of attention to the protesters.

"Many Chinese people are hurt by the media's portrayal of the situation," Lu said. "The spirit here today is to show the Olympic spirit, not use the Olympics as an excuse to hijack the governments."

But Duke University junior Adam Weiss, a member of the Duke Undergraduate Human Rights Coalition, said the Olympics are inherently political and therefore valid grounds for protest.

Weiss organized a pro-Tibet demonstration on his campus Wednesday, gathering a group of

students for a cross-campus run holding Tibetan flags.

The demonstration faced a group of 60 to 80 counter-protesters carrying Chinese flags and blocking the view of the runners.

"I wanted to take the idea of celebrating these Olympics through a torch relay and do the reverse," he said. "Instead of celebrating the Chinese government, I said, 'Let's celebrate the Tibetan people who are often neglected and forgotten.'"

Weiss said that while he was glad to see the activism, he supports boycotting the opening ceremonies.

UNC geography professor Christopher Gaffney, who is teaching a course next fall titled "Globalization and Sport," said the opening ceremony is a good time to bring up political issues.

"It is an international exhibition," he said.

In response to China's violations, world leaders such as the president of France have said they will not attend the opening ceremony.

UNC journalism professor Charles Tuggle, who will lead a group of journalism students to Beijing this summer to report for the Beijing Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games, said he thinks the end result of the Olympic protests will be good.

"The Chinese know what they are doing and want to show themselves as a major world player, so they knew that some major criticism was going to come along with it," Tuggle said.

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

UNC hosts celebration of author's life, influence

BY AARON TAUBE
STAFF WRITER

In 1940, renowned black author Richard Wright shocked white Americans with his novel "Native Son," a graphic portrayal of poverty and racism in Chicago.

The next year, Wright spent the summer in Chapel Hill, turning the

novel into a Broadway play with UNC professor Paul Green.

One hundred years after Wright's birth, both works remain influential.

In a celebration of what would have been Wright's 100th birthday, UNC hosted a discussion Sunday about the author's continued rele-

vance, as part of a two-day celebration of the writer's life.

"It's really important to celebrate the life of Wright," said English professor Kristina Bobo, who has given speeches across the country about his works.

"He had a tremendous impact on the way people thought about racial issues in America."

"Native Son" tells the story of Bigger Thomas, a scared, angry black youth who goes on a crime spree after accidentally smothering a rich white girl with a pillow.

The story confronts the reader with the idea that such crimes are the result of the poverty many blacks are forced to endure at the ends of white oppression.

"Native Son" ... really sort of shocked people out of their complacency about a lot of things that were

going on at the time," Bobo said.

The weekend, conceived by junior English major Jonah Garson of Chapel Hill, also included a staged reading of Green's adaptation of "Native Son" and a dramatic narrative of Wright's life alongside performed readings of his works.

Similar events have been held across the country and globe, including at the American University of Paris, Medgar Evers College in New York City and at the Natchez Literary and Cinema Celebration in Mississippi.

A celebration is also planned for in Hiroshima, Japan, in June, hosted by the Japan Black Studies Association.

UNC's event featured speakers from East Carolina University and Dillard University in Louisiana, as



Barbette Hunter, Trevor Johnson, Tiera Parker and Ryan Moseley present a reading of the Paul Green adaptation of Richard Wright's "Native Son."

well as the late author's daughter, Julia Wright, who lives in Paris.

Julia Wright presented a paper, "Richard Wright's Premonition of Katrina in his Flood Stories," which compared two of her father's short stories to the events of 2005.

"My father had an uncanny way of seeing what future problems would remain unsolved and why," Julia Wright said after the presentation.

Wright was born on a Mississippi farm in 1908 to an illiterate share-

cropper and a schoolteacher.

Garson said he was initially intrigued by the project because of a distant familial connection to the late author.

Both Wright, who died in Paris in 1960, and Garson's great-uncle were members of the Chicago chapter of the John Reed Club, which organized radical Communist writers and artists.

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SATURDAY
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BASEBALL vs. Boston College 1 PM

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BASEBALL vs. Boston College 1 PM

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