



**JOSEPH R. SCHWARTZ**  
OVER THE HILL?  
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## So what if all of us drive Subaru?

Waking early one morning this week to find the television still on, blaring a bizarre infomercial for a car dealership, I saw middle-aged men dressed as kings and athletes using zero-down offers, low monthly payments and stereotypes to lure potential buyers.

The cobwebs blurred my vision to the name of the Triangle-based auto hawkers, but my ears were able to discern that they had cars in "every make and model" (they repeated this often), and I listened passively as they followed car to car, Jaguar to Honda to Lexus and so on.

Until they got to the Subaru. "Chapel Hillians,"

Subaru. ... Chapel Hill. Chapel Hill. Shout-out to Chapel Hill," they bellowed as they raised their palms to the ceiling again and again as if to raise the roof so that Tyler Hansbrough's head could fit into the showcase room.

Really? I've lived here all my life, and I haven't really noticed the streets running rampant with Subarus. I seem to see more people driving a Toyota Prius or riding a bicycle (where are the Subaru-only lanes?) as I make my trek up Cameron Avenue every morning.

Maybe the salesmen think we're cuckoo for their Crocodile Dundee wagons because Subaru has an environmental focus and we like to think of ourselves as eco-friendly. Maybe because the cars lend themselves to the outdoors, and a lot of us love trees and activities that involve being near them. The dealers connected two and two.

Surely nothing sounds more Chapel Hill than being in the driver's seat of an all-wheel drive vehicle built by rainforest-lovers. This Subaru claim seems a stretch, but outsider stereotypes of Chapel Hill are nothing new.

You've heard them. We're just a bunch of utopian-minded liberals whose love for skinny lattes is rivaled only by our affinity for the right to peacefully assemble.

To northerners, townies here have funny accents. To southerners, we are a group of misplaced northerners.

The University has its own labels. Some call UNC the "Light on the Hill," dubbing it a place where forthright surveyors of knowledge from across the land can come to better themselves. Others call us an Ivory Tower, a place where pretentious people talk about how smart they are — or how unintelligent everyone else is, whichever inflates the ego more.

Former U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms, a long-time N.C. Republican, famously said that instead of using taxpayer money to build a state zoo, leaders could just erect fences around Chapel Hill, or so the story goes.

I'm willing to concede that there is some slight truth to all of these assertions, and that's why Chapel Hill is not only my hometown, but a part of my identity.

We live in a place where hula-hooping isn't only for kids, where dancing on the lawn is symbolic of a greater ideal and where tie-dye is more common than solid colors.

We value debate and civic engagement to the point that we sometimes let planning action prevent us from taking action.

I like hearing two bikers discuss if they should use MLA or Chicago style. I like being asked if I have a few minutes for the environment (sure, if you're asking me to make a "Captain Planet" cameo).

Chapel Hill is unique, unlike any other place in this Red state. And that's why I like it so much. We dare to be different, and we don't mind taking criticism for it.

So as I look to move on from college — and from Chapel Hill High School and McDougall Middle School — I'm struck by the fact that I can't drive a Subaru to anywhere quite as defiantly itself as Chapel Hill.

Outsiders, keep your stereotypes. We'll just take our utopia.

**EDITORIAL CARTOON** By Don Wright, Palm Beach Post



## Election 2008: Tune out

News media drowns market with trivial coverage

More than 16 months ago, Hillary Clinton officially announced she was running for the nomination of the Democratic Party.

And since long before then, she's nurtured a dream of becoming America's first female president.

But on Tuesday night, she all but conceded the delegate race to Barack Obama (a concession already decided by basic math) saying she'll decide her next move in the coming days, perhaps hibernating for four years (maybe eight).

Now that the grueling nomination process has all but ended, Obama only has another five months of campaigning ahead of him.

If those five months are anything like the 16 the public has endured already, it will be reason enough for us to revise LSD doctor Timothy Leary's

famous proclamation to "Turn on. Tune in. Drop out."

The official 2008 general election slogan should read: "Turn off. Tune out. Burn your newspapers."

This election already has been the subject of a staggering amount of 24-hour recycled media coverage. And while the presidential race should be an issue of tremendous importance and emphasis, there's one problem.

By and large, election reporting has had no substance.

Instead of hearing about candidates' policy differences, the American people have taken in little more than gossip.

Rather than hearing about how this country's needs will be met, we've jumped from press conference to press conference, listening to well-paid public relations experts perform damage control.

One need look no further

than Tuesday's headlines.

"Bill Clinton sorry for 'scumbag' remarks, spokesman says," reads CNN.

Fortunately for him, the former president won't be fired, as have a slew of campaign advisors.

"Next, Obama's foes will go after his wife," says the Chicago Sun-Times, playing into the hands of divisive campaign strategists.

Just how bad is the coverage?

According to The Harvard Center for Public Leadership, an incredible 88 percent of Americans believe "campaign coverage focuses on trivial issues."

The Center for Media and Public Affairs monitored almost 500 stories on NBC, ABC, CBS and FOX News and found that "more stories were aired about the candidates' campaign strategies than about their policy positions."

We must pressure our media outlets if we want the democratic process to be meaningful this fall.

## Don't force public service

Helping the community should be a choice, not a chore

Carolina students: rewind. Picture your high school days for just a moment. I know it's painful, but stick with us.

Remember all the clubs you joined and all the community service hours you logged so you could stack your transcript?

Fast forward. Now that you're in college, where have all those hours gone?

We're betting you haven't spent nearly as many tutoring children. It's OK; we haven't either.

And so Tony Rand, N.C. state Senate majority leader, has introduced a bill that would require student community service.

If the bill is passed, bachelor's degree-seeking students enrolled in the state's public and private colleges after 2012 would have to spend 20 hours per semester volunteering with K-12 students.

The state should promptly squelch this bill — along with all other legislation that requires "volunteering."

Undoubtedly, Rand's legislation would aid the state's public schools by opening them up to the intellectual resources of UNC's undergraduates.

And many of our state schools need the help. It is clear that our teachers, who currently earn salaries below the national average, are stretched thin by growing classrooms and a lack of resources.

But mandating volunteering has adverse longterm effects for the volunteers.

Many of us who were forced to perform community service in high school never developed an appreciation for its benefits and its pleasures.

We did it because we had to.

Instead of adding more service requirements, schools — from the early stages of education — should promote volunteering and offer rewards for those who give back.

For instance, UNC's APPLES program is an excellent case of how service can be fused with

course credit in an engaging way.

Educators in middle school and high school should better incorporate community service in the classroom by encouraging course-related volunteering and volunteering that appeals to the individual's interests.

It is that kind of effort that will encourage the attitudes Rand seeks to engender.

But for now his strategy appears to be nothing more than a pass-the-buck approach that would allow the state to avoid spending serious money on much-needed pay raises and upgrades.

Also, Rand has packaged his bill in an offensive manner, dedicating it to the memory of Eve Carson, former student body president, and Abhijit Mahato, a slain Duke University graduate student.

Carson and Mahato have no connection to the bill, and Rand's reference to them appears to be a shameful attempt to exploit their memories for political gain.

## Webmail woefully behind

UNC should change mail system to make it competitive

Today's technology goes obsolete and out of style faster than the average college student (with an average college student's bank account) can dish out the money.

Our iPods now come as phones, our TVs come in high definition and our Facebook even features an instant messaging system.

But our UNC Webmail stays the same, passing the days — and years — as steadily as an antique grandfather clock.

Slow-loading pages plague the e-mailer with heavy traffic.

High volume brings the system's users to a frustrating crawl in the hours around lunch.

And a lack of features and upgrades plague everyone else.

As such, it shouldn't surprise anyone that more than half of the University's students don't use Webmail, instead electing to forward their mail to a faster, more convenient client such as Gmail.

We should welcome the suggested modifications in the works by Information Technology Services.

Larry Conrad, the new vice chancellor and chief information officer for ITS, said his office will present a comprehensive overhaul plan for Webmail by the end of the month.

His main goal: Make sure that anyone can access whatever they want whenever they

want from wherever they are.

If Webmail is to become relevant for Carolina students, it must at least equal its main competitor, Gmail.

That means pages must load more quickly, and hefty attachments mustn't bring computers to a standstill. That means its design must be more attractive.

Beyond that, new features need to be added.

Students would make use of well-designed instant messaging systems, interactive schedule books and a more intuitive spam-blocking service.

By next summer, Conrad hopes to have changes in place.

We hope that then we can take pride in an e-mail service unique to UNC.

**QUOTE OF THE WEEK:**

"Tripping on the bricks in the quad. But it's OK, because now I've already done that."

HARRIS GOOGE, ON HIS BIGGEST FEAR AS A FRESHMAN

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

Due to space constraints, letters are sometimes cut. Read the full-length versions online at the letters blog, or post your own response to a letter. VISIT// apps.dailytarheel.com/wpblogs/archives/category/letters

**Flaws in state sector are contributing to extortion**

TO THE EDITOR:

Earlier this week, Boyce Hudson, a former official with the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) pled guilty to charges of extortion.

Part of what Hudson received in payment as part of that extortion was a lucrative two-year consulting contract with the company that was the target of his extortion and which benefited from his actions while he was at DENR.

Hudson's behavior is extreme, but it does help highlight two key problems in North Carolina's government.

Our state employees, most of whom work very hard to provide us with essential services that keep us safe, frequently earn far less in their jobs than they could working in the private sector.

Too often, people come and learn their crafts while working for the state and then move on to private companies.

Unfortunately, despite the ethics reforms passed in the last three years, there is still an open revolving door which allows someone to work for the state of North Carolina on Friday and, on Monday morning, be at work for a private company lobbying the people with whom they used to work.

Our legislators and state agency heads have to wait at least six months after they leave public service before they can lobby their former colleagues. U.S. Senators have to wait two years before they can do the same.

There needs to be a cooling-off period for top level state employees before they can go to work for the businesses they have been regulating, supervising and granting contracts to.

In 2005, Senator (Tony) Rand, D-Cumberland, included a cooling-off period in Senate Bill 612, the first of the major reform bills. It is time to enact that legislation and not wait for another example of misdeeds to pop to the surface.

Jane B. Pinsky  
Director  
N.C. Coalition for Lobbying and Government Reform

**Construction endangers pedestrians on Manning**

TO THE EDITOR:  
Please write about how construction has overtaken safety on the corner of Manning Drive and Columbia Street.

**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.

People who work and study in the buildings on the south side of Manning (parking deck side) must cross Manning once and Columbia twice to get to the health sciences bus stop.

Is this safe?

Katie Berger  
Chapel Hill

**Illegal immigration hurt by new South Carolina law**

TO THE EDITOR:

Americans for Legal Immigration Political Action Committee activists celebrated a victory in South Carolina last Friday, after months of activism that resulted in one of the strongest state laws in America cracking down on illegal immigration.

The new legislation will bar illegal aliens from all taxpayer-funded colleges and require employers to verify they are only hiring American citizens and legal immigrants. The S.C. legislation follows new tough laws in Ariz., Ga., Okla., R.I. and others.

"Our activists on the ground and from across the nation worked very hard in South Carolina," said William Gheen of ALIPAC.

"The momentum for immigration enforcement is clear in the states. The illegal aliens are leaving South Carolina and Georgia, making North Carolina one of their top destinations. As the illegal aliens are headed our way, we hope to bring our progress with enforcement legislation to North Carolina now."

North Carolina recently made national headlines over a decision to admit and then bar illegal aliens from community colleges.

This week, a handful of Democrat legislators announced plans to try and assist illegal aliens.

In 2008, the state has considered more than 1,100 bills that deal with aspects of immigration. The vast majority of these bills advocate enforcement and the removal of taxpayer resources.

"We have a destructive human tsunami headed our way," said Gheen. "N.C. lawmakers must act NOW to protect American jobs, tax resources and lives. Our state must follow the lead of our neighbors and batten down the hatches immediately."

ALIPAC is a national organization credited with defeating pro-illegal alien legislation, while securing the passage of N.C. laws that favor enforcement.

The group plans to launch a historic and unprecedented statewide effort that begins next week!

William Gheen  
ALIPAC

**The Daily Tar Heel**

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of editorial freedom

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