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IF YOU'RE INTO IT
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Elections make our candidates flip, flop

The system of primaries and caucuses used in U.S. politics turns even the most well-intentioned candidates into heartbreakers.

Democrats and Republicans veer to their respective ends of the political spectrum, gathering enough base support to win the nomination, before they return to the center in the hope of wooing the country's moderate and undecided voters.

This inevitably leaves a number of early supporters feeling somewhat disillusioned.

And despite gratuitous use of the word "change," 2008 doesn't look that much different.

(A microphone descends from the ceiling into a boxing ring.)

"Ladies and gentlemen," booms the announcer, "in the blue corner, hailing from Illinois, he is the Liberal Lion, the Hero of Hope, and some say Bobby Kennedy Incarnate ... Senator Barack Obama!"

The crowd erupts, thousands of flashbulbs go off, and the ring is blanketed by an avalanche of puffs.

"And in the red corner, from Arizona, he is the Rogue Republican, the Marvelous Maverick and a true American hero ... Senator John McCain!" McCain smiles politely as he is greeted by a thunderous golf clap. An elderly couple proudly raises a homemade sign.

The bell sounds, and Obama scores early and often. He touts his opposition to the Iraq war, his support of heavy investment in alternative energies and the need for universal health care. He does so with a style and purpose that many Democrats haven't seen for a long time, and they adore him for it.

This doesn't last long, though. Obama knows that he'll need more than just the support of his base in the general election. The crowd hushes as he rejects public financing for his campaign (after vigorously promoting it), supports a bill granting telecommunications companies immunity for their parts in illegal wiretapping after Sept. 11 (after vigorously opposing it) and refers to his previously sharp critiques of NAFTA as "overheated."

The list goes on. It seems that the shining champion of change, who had built a campaign around avoiding politics as usual, is not beyond conforming to what is politically expedient.

Here is where the scrappy McCain might have a slight edge. While his positional shifts have been just as flagrant as Obama's, McCain has been making them incrementally since he lost the nomination to George W. Bush in 2000, making his about-face far less dramatic.

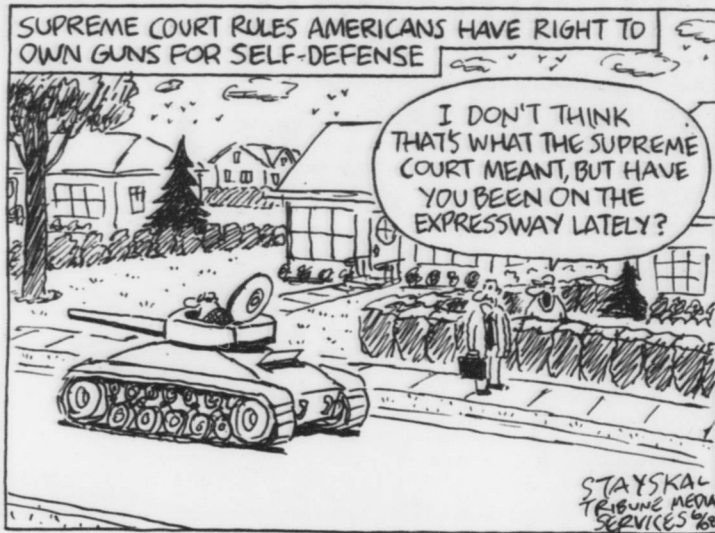
The man who initially opposed the Bush tax cuts now wants them to be made permanent. McCain referred to the late Rev. Jerry Falwell as an "agent of intolerance" in 2000 but would deliver the commencement speech at Falwell's Liberty University six years later. And the captain of the Straight Talk Express who once supported Roe v. Wade now favors a constitutional amendment banning abortion.

These changes certainly helped McCain wrap up the Republican nomination, but don't be surprised in the coming months as he drifts left on issues such as immigration and stem cell research.

So does this mean that Obama's supporters will gnash their teeth, reclaim their underwear and vote for someone else? Probably not. Regardless of how much glossy sheen he loses, Democrats know that Obama can win, and they will happily support a flawed candidate if it means sticking it to the Republicans in November.

But no matter whom you like or don't like, we shouldn't easily forgive the malleable convictions of our leaders just because the system encourages it. Let them know. Let's get ready to grumble.

EDITORIAL CARTOON By Wayne Stayskal, Tribune Media Services



Helms' death symbolic

Senator passes as state shifts toward the Left

Former senator Jesse Helms will not be remembered for being particularly eloquent, open-minded or understanding.

Indeed, Jesse himself would probably rather be seen as a consistent, old-fashioned and uncensored politician.

For the better part of a quarter-century, though, Helms ran the show and symbolized the ideals for which he crusaded.

More than anything, his death is an interesting and timely symbol of the changing face of North Carolina politics.

In the 1960s, the civil rights movement began to garner support from some Democrats, including President Lyndon Johnson. The traditionally conservative Democratic Party began to take on entirely new ideals, and its traditional voters were left stranded.

At this time, Republicans such as Helms and Ronald Reagan began to lead the move-

ment toward the "New Right," a conservative and traditional Republican Party favored by much of the same constituency who formed the backbone of the "Dixiecrats" and the once "Solid Democratic South."

The GOP as we know it today exists because of this movement.

Helms played a crucial role in reshaping American politics, all with the backing of his home state of North Carolina.

Helms was many things to many people, but to most, his thick black glasses and wrinkled, chubby grin were the picture of North Carolina's conservatism and political lean.

But, as a state, we are beginning to distance ourselves from what could be called the "Jesse Helms era." Once a staunchly Republican state, we are working our way toward the left side of the aisle.

Since Nixon in 1968, our state

has voted Republican in every presidential election, except in 1976 when we supported fellow Southerner Jimmy Carter.

Yet in today's North Carolina, we have a Democratic governor and Democratic majorities in both houses of the legislature, supreme court and in U.S. house seats.

Nationally, the disapproval rating of the Republican president is at an all-time high, and a Democratic Congress is in place for the first time since 1995.

And meanwhile urban areas such as the Triangle, the Triad and Charlotte are voting increasingly Democratic and continue to grow at rates exceeding those of the more Republican rural areas.

It seems as though the tide is turning in North Carolina, and the thought of Jesse Helms symbolizing that transition probably has the Senator turning in his grave, too.

Rails would link Triangle

Mass transit system could mimic Charlotte's success

Anyone who's made the drive from Chapel Hill to Raleigh will tell you that something needs to be done to address the traffic problem. Our major highways are bogged down by bumper-to-bumper gridlock as it is, and by 2035, an additional one million people are expected to flock to the area.

If you think traffic's bad now, just wait until you're driving to work with 2.5 million others.

The good news is that help might already be on the way. The Special Transit Advisory Commission has already outlined a plan to update and streamline the Triangle's transportation system by 2035.

At the heart of this proposal is a new light rail system connecting Chapel Hill with Durham, Raleigh and Raleigh-Durham International Airport.

Additional bus routes running from Chapel Hill to Raleigh will alleviate pressure from the most congested roads in the Triangle, such as Wade Avenue and the Beltway.

The comprehensive \$8.2

billion project is expected to be completed by 2035, just in time to accommodate the increasing population.

While \$8.2 billion across the next 27 years is a lot of money, our state legislature has plans in motion to defray the costs.

Already there is a bill in the North Carolina Senate that would allow county referendums on a half-cent sales tax to support the STAC transit project.

Additionally, a bill currently in both houses of Congress would provide a 25 percent tax credit for the expansion of railroad capacity. Combined with state and federal grants, these legislative measures could provide sensible financing for a new light rail system.

Of course, this proposed transit system means nothing without riders. The STAC plan is actually the second of its kind; a previous Triangle Transit Authority proposal for light rail between Chapel Hill and Durham was refused federal funding on the grounds that its usage would not be high enough to merit govern-

ment money being spent on it.

On the other hand, Charlotte's new "Lynx" light rail and bus system is an unanticipated success. After opening in 2007, the Lynx system has wildly exceeded expectations and operates at 136 percent of its expected usage. It is now impossible to find parking in a Lynx lot.

It is high time for a transit overhaul. Current city bus systems are too isolated for the integrated Triangle of the future.

And the area's only regional transit system, the TTA, is not ubiquitous enough to provide a viable option for most people. While the TTA has many stops in Durham and Raleigh, there are only two bus stops in Chapel Hill and two park and ride lots in Hillsborough.

As people continue to migrate to the area, the traffic problem will only grow larger and nastier. And with gasoline at \$4 per gallon and rising, the STAC plan and light rail begin to look more sensible for the Triangle's future.

Justice needs composure

State should avoid a brash response to Carson suspect

The founding principles of the American legal system are perhaps summarized best by the familiar credo: Innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

That statement — along with the rational and dispassionate "due process" it carries with it — speaks to our society's liberal democratic ideals.

But that's in theory. In reality, we struggle to separate passion from process and vengeance from justice.

Consider Demario James Atwater, the 21-year-old Durham man who stands accused of the murder of former Student Body President Eve Carson, as well as the kidnapping, armed robbery and firearm possession related to

the slaying.

If the evidence against him is as overwhelming as it seems, he will be found guilty.

Though that hardly matters. In most observers' minds, he and Lawrence Lovette Jr. are already convicted.

And because of the magnitude and cruelty of his crime, there are and will continue to be calls for Atwater's execution.

On Aug. 11, Orange County will hold a hearing to determine if the death penalty is sought against Atwater, who, unlike Lovette, is eligible for execution because of his age.

Here on campus, where the Young Democrats flourish, there will be a bloodlust.

Justice, though, should be about scales put in balance.

Not about eye for an eye retribution.

Executing the murderer does not bring back the victim, nor can it heal the wounds opened by the crime.

There are those who argue that we not spend money to keep criminals in jail. That it would be cheaper to put them to death.

But that's a perverse and unprincipled stand.

Even when a crime hits close to home, as this one has, we must stay true to our democratic ideals. We must stay calm.

Even a criminal such as Atwater, who seems to have no redeeming features, deserves a fair run through the system.

And we should be weary of letting our government kill him in our name.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK:

"I haven't had any problems school-wise, football-wise; I think we're getting better."

MARVIN AUSTIN, DEFENSIVE TACKLE, ON HIS TIME AT UNC

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

Sidewalk closures on South Campus harm pedestrians

TO THE EDITOR:

I was dismayed to see that due to construction at the dental school, the sidewalks on Columbia Street and Manning Drive have been closed. Apparently UNC places a higher priority on space for construction than on safety for UNC employees, students and visitors.

This is an area of high pedestrian traffic, where several individuals have already been killed or injured by cars in recent months and years. Certainly, the construction companies can move their fences back a few feet to give the pedestrians back our sidewalks.

I hope that the UNC administration corrects this situation before someone else is killed or injured in an accident.

Richard Goldberg
Research Assistant Professor
Biomedical Engineering

DTH should be commended for mentioning Gettysburg

TO THE EDITOR:

You are to be congratulated for mentioning Pickett's charge on July 3, 1863, and the battle of Gettysburg in last week's edition (This Day in History, July 3).

Space constraints prevented further details, but for UNC, this is not only an important date in history but a turning point in the life of the University, as we lost Brigadier General James Johnston Pettigrew (1828-1863), who also participated in the fatal charge on July 3 and later died on the retreat back into Virginia.

He was a scholar and published author and his portrait is on display in the manuscripts collection in Wilson Library. Pettigrew Hall bears his name.

F. Marion Redd
UNC Printing Services

A few suggestions for my fellow travellers at UNC

TO THE EDITOR:

To the driver who stops in the middle of the road to wave me across the street:

Don't feel surprised or underappreciated when I barely even give you a wave along with my look of annoyance while I cross the street. (With the exception of UNC's campus, where pedestrians stroll in front of moving motorists regularly and everyone has a pretty good understanding that that's the way it goes.) You should really just keep driving.

I know you're trying to show

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.

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