

The Daily Tar Heel

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WHAT'S HOME

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Our world as seen by a Cuban immigrant

It was my first day at the Carolina Inn and co-workers posed the typical introductory questions. Inevitably the topic fell on the presidential race.

I hesitated to disclose my political preference as a first impression. Pressed, I cupped my hand over my mouth and stated my candidate in an exaggerated whisper.

COMMUNITY COLUMNIST

At the dinner break, Marlene Benitez leaned over and asked me why, in a free country, I would keep my politics quiet. She is from Cuba, where, by her description, political opposition is forcibly muted.

In a subsequent interview this past Saturday, Benitez, 39, shared a perspective on America I'd previously only encountered as a cliché in political speeches.

A love of freedom. Refreshing from a person who'd actually lived without it.

Benitez, a resident of Graham, came to the U.S. in 2005 after winning an international Green Card lottery. She'd been applying to get out of Cuba since 1994.

Q: Why were you so eager to leave Cuba?

A: Well first, because in Cuba people cannot go to other country. They can't have a relationship with people from other country. The government in Cuba is very bad. You have to lie. For example, say a person from another country go to my country, I have to talk about my government good. I know it's not good, but if I talk bad, maybe the police will come and take me or I lose my job.

Q: Did that happen to anyone you knew?

A: Yes. I know a person in Cuba. He sometimes talk with people about the government and he now is in jail for 25 years only for saying what he thought about the government.

Q: What else made you leave?

A: I came here, too, for my sons. Because I know my sons here have many opportunities for their study. In my country, the government talk every day, every year, every moment that the education in Cuba is perfect, and really it's not true.

But here they have the opportunity more to study.

Q: Do people act differently here than in Cuba?

A: Yes, it's very different. The first thing that surprised me was that Americans, maybe not all the time, but they live happy. I think the first thing that makes a person happy is free life. You can express, you can say what you want.

And the other thing that made me surprised was that you don't have an age limit for study. Anybody can go to the school. Nobody says, 'No you are older, you can't.'

I want to go. Maybe close to my house. Alamance Community College. I want to study about health.

Q: Are people happy in Cuba?

A: Not like here. Not like here, really.

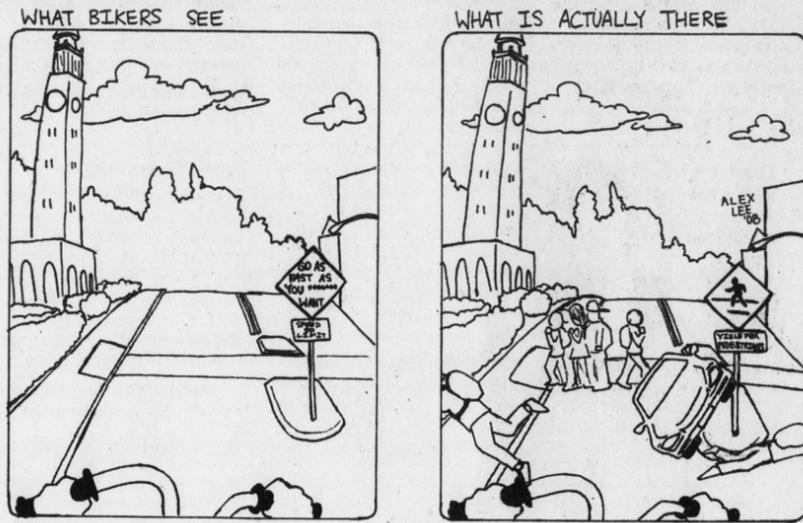
Q: Do you want your sons to become citizens of the United States someday?

A: I want that my sons will do good life here.

Q: Have a good life here?

A: Not have, do it. So this government feels proud that the Cuban person coming here will be a good person in society. Because really I appreciate that the U.S.A. permit that I come. The least thing we can do is to have the government say, 'You are a good person for society.'

EDITORIAL CARTOON By Alex Lee, lobin@email.unc.edu



Time for honesty, openness

Need exists for compromise on housekeeping issues

Despite overtures of compromise, housekeepers and administration officials have so far been unable to reach a major agreement on anything.

We urge all parties — housekeepers, managers and administration officials — to approach negotiations openly and honestly. Compromise is in the best interest of all those involved.

For years, the UNC housekeeping staff and University administrators have butted heads. This summer, a housekeeping committee was created to address employee needs and housekeeping requirements. And last week the lowest-paid employees received a raise.

Yet despite the progress, Student Action with Workers,

a campus labor support organization, has recently alleged that University workers are being threatened by their superiors to keep their grievances to themselves.

In an e-mail posted on the SAW Web site, member Mike Hachey wrote that "as workers continue to organize across campus today, they are again facing intimidation and harassment from the University and its subcontractors."

If this is indeed true, something needs to be done immediately. UNC prides itself on being an open, accepting environment, and there is no reason that employees — or anyone — on campus should feel scared to voice concerns they hold.

In the past, Chancellor Thorp

has made an effort to work with employees. In September, he met with members of the housekeeping committee to discuss issues of employee hours and e-mailed workers to tell them their injustices are a priority.

If employees at the University are being threatened, the administration needs to work to put a stop to it.

We don't doubt that Chancellor Thorp would agree, but he needs to remain proactive about potential problems that are troubling our employees.

And housekeepers need to be upfront about what exactly their issues are. Both sides should remain open and communicate with each other in order for anything to be resolved.

Give Zingo a ring-o

A designated driving option students should consider

In preparation for a night of partying, not only must you pick out an outfit and determine which parties deserve your attendance, but you also should have a solid contingency plan for getting home safely.

When planning your transportation, you should also consider your safety and that of others by not drinking and driving.

Finding alternative ways to get around town when drinking can be difficult, but there are several options available.

And now there is a new solution to getting home safely with

the introduction of Zingo service to the Chapel Hill area.

Zingo "chauffeurs," as they are referred to, are dispatched to your car, riding a scooter, which will be collapsed and placed in your automobile's trunk.

The sober "chauffeur" will then drive you and your car home safely.

You could utilize Chapel Hill's wonderful and free bus system or Safe Ride. But often these buses are crowded at night and unreliable.

You could also call a cab to pick you up. But cabs are often

foul-smelling and expensive.

Zingo allows you drive to your favorite drinking establishment in the comfort of your own car.

While the prices may appear extravagant to some, firsthand accounts of the service have been positive.

While none of these services are perfect, it's important to make a concerted effort to prevent drunk driving.

With the introduction of this new service, Zingo provides yet another option in getting home safely and is a step in the right direction to curb drunk driving.

Budget cuts? No problem

UNC will soon face a budget cut of several million dollars. As I am clearly an expert in the field of economics, here are my proposals for what we can completely cut out of the budget.

■ Automatic blinds: These newfangled systems allow the blinds on all windows to be lowered automatically in many classrooms during a PowerPoint presentation or particularly illuminating YouTube clip. This creates the perception that my teacher can lower the blinds at will by through a mental command. The trickery usually leads me to detect the sound of the doors automatically locking me in, too. It is creepy.

■ Paper towels in the bathrooms of Kenan Stadium: By the third quarter the girls' facilities are gag-inducing. Dirty paper towels not only form a mountainous structure from the trash can to the ceiling, but also litter the floor. Carolina girls are the best in the world, but they do not have good restroom etiquette. Please stop purchasing paper towels for them in Kenan.

■ Tree protection zones: We should stop buying neon orange plastic fences to block off every tree on campus. What are they protecting? Surely not the view because now I have to avert my eyes to reduce harmful glare. These trees have stood for hundreds of years; I think they will



LISA ANDRUKONIS
A PIECE A LISA

Editorial board member from Arlington, Va.

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survive. I love the environment, too. So when you discard of these ridiculous fences, please do so properly so no dolphins choke on them.

■ SASB investments: No one uses the plasma screen Smart Boards in SASB. You can hook them up to your laptop to enlarge the screen and play with magic markers that only write virtually. I'm not making this stuff up. I'm sure these flat screens are on the cutting edge of technology but the front desk girl herself told me she has never seen a single person use them. Projects like this call to mind a certain "song that never ends" jingle and lead me to propose a "spending freeze" on construction in general.

■ Special events in Graham Memorial: I don't know what these unspecified events are but why must the lounge close at 2 p.m. for them? They must cost something, but my afternoon nap on the green velvet couch is free.

■ Ellipticals: What are ellipticals' purpose if not making you feel like you have exercised when you have neither sweated nor begun breathing hardly? Yes, I KNOW it's possible to alter the intensity, but I rarely see students doing any such thing. I do see them enjoying ellipticals with a full face of makeup. As a general rule, if you can read Cosmo at the same time, you're not working out. The only positive thing about ellipticals is that they are easy on the joints. You are a 20-year-old at the absolute peak of your physical fitness. I suggest water aerobics or power walking if you are worried about your joints. Until then, please sell those machines.

■ Flat screen in Lenoir: When you come down the escalator, there is a flat screen TV which half the time is turned off and many times just states "UNC Sports Medicine." Clearly pork-barrel spending.

■ Ram Village "turf renovation": Now this is a great use of money. How much does it cost us to "renovate" the grass in between Ram Villages by laying plastic netting? Yes, the grass will grow again if you block it off, until it rains and people play mud football again and all that effort goes down the drain.

I hereby submit my official proposal. I sincerely hope the community considers these spending cuts.

QUOTE OF THE DAY:

"I was sitting there in the audience and I just went like, 'Oh wow. This means that we've really got a task.'"

STEVEN REZNICK, ASSOCIATE DEAN, ON THE CHANCELLOR SPEAKING ABOUT THE ENROLLMENT EXCELLENCE TASK FORCE

FEATURED ONLINE READER COMMENT:

"They do get it! Remember how well they played last year, yet they had trouble winning games in the fourth quarter?"

— ON "UNC BEATS NOTRE DAME 29-24"

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Honor Court should have handled McClendon case

TO THE EDITOR:

I am disappointed by the egregious failure in Dr. Adam Grant, Student Congress and The Daily Tar Heel to follow the academic rights of Ms. Shaniqua McClendon given to her by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). These rights keep Ms. McClendon's academic information from being released without her explicit consent.

It further pains me to see Student Congress and the DTH taking on the roll of public decider and judge, rather than allowing Honor Court — the backbone of our student system — to work efficiently. Calling upon an ethical review takes judgment out of the hands of Honor Court and gives Student Congress more power than it holds. If Congress felt that more information was needed with regards to the budgetary needs of Concepts of Colors, then it is simply a finance committee concern. That is what the issue is with regards to Student Congress, not Ms. McClendon's possible error in academic judgment.

I use "possible" in the last sentence as it is not for us to decide, but for the Student Body Attorney General and, if needed, members of Honor Court.

While the DTH opinion page chose to point blame on Congress, they forgot (not surprisingly) to look at their own actions which led to greater public knowledge that left Ms. McClendon feeling attacked and "guilty."

I hope that in the future, our entire community will respect the rights of our students and respect the fact that we are students after all. We make mistakes and we grow.

Andrew Coonin
Senior
Public Policy and Dramatic
Art

Funding request process is fundamentally flawed

TO THE EDITOR:

As both an avid reader of The Daily Tar Heel and a passionate member of student government, what strikes me most about Shaniqua McClendon's story is what we're all overlooking: a flaw in the underlying system of how Student Congress appropriates money to student organizations. Getting money for our student organizations shouldn't be a game of guessing and fudging numbers.

I propose Student Congress offer a workshop once a semester, open to the student body, to clearly outline how to propose a coherent, thorough and ethical budget and present it in the desired manner to Student Congress. This way, members of Congress can most easily, fairly and accurately determine the financial needs of an organization. (In a system of openness of information like this one, everyone will benefit.)

As Rachel Craft wrote ("DTH, Student Congress both need a reality check," Oct. 10), there is something fundamentally wrong when a student leader would even have to consider deceiving Congress, which routinely halves student budgets, in order to get the money for his or her organization. The knowledge of how to appropriately receive funds from

Congress is simply not out there in a straightforward way, and it needs to be.

We all need a reminder to look past controversy, both on campus and in the community, and determine the root of the problems we face. What can we do to enact real change in our campus and community? Student Congress, let's start with you!

Elaina Giolando
Sophomore
International Studies and
Chinese

Hate speech from Obama supporters exists as well

TO THE EDITOR:

Monday, William Schlieper documented some disparaging remarks made by McCain-Palin supporters directed at Sen. Obama ("Some McCain supporters turning to hate at rallies," Oct. 13 letter to the editor). If only that were the whole story. Sadly, the other side of this coin is just as ugly.

In Seattle, someone defaced a sidewalk with graffiti saying: "Abort Palin."

Online, the behavior doesn't improve. In a "Give Governor Palin a Nickname" contest at the Democratic Underground, some more civil entries include: "Cruella" and "Governor Jesus Camp."

The vitriol is not limited to anonymous bystanders. Former Atlantic Magazine photographer Jill Greenberg posts images at her blog including Sen. McCain licking his blood-soaked lips with a caption reading: "I am a blood-thirsty warmonger." Another image depicts a monkey defecating on the senator's head.

I hope Mr. Schlieper understands that there are offensive and inexcusable remarks directed at both campaigns. I also hope Mr. Schlieper and the rest of the country vote based on the platforms presented by each candidate and not the comments directed at either candidate.

Adam Azman
Graduate Student
Department of Chemistry

Headline from UNC versus ND game was misleading

TO THE EDITOR:

In the past, The Daily Tar Heel has defended its sports writers against numerous claims of bias. When reading the articles, it's evident they try very hard, and succeed most of the time, to prevent any of their own bias from slipping into the article. But this effort is ruined when the title reflects bias that demeans both teams.

Titling the article on the UNC vs. Notre Dame football game "Lucky Breaks" was an extremely poor decision. The implication that luck, and not skill, won the game is appalling. To the writer's credit, the article does not reflect this sentiment toward the game.

Personally, I applaud both teams, UNC and Notre Dame, for the very exciting game on Saturday night. I just wish that the DTH would aim for true unbiased reporting instead of counteracting their own bias by trivializing both teams' performances.

JC Peterson
UNC Staff
UNC Student Stores

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.

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