

## Letters to the editor

# Professor's historical critique of 'Roots' lacks substance, given an F+

To the editor:

Dr. Williamson's grade of D- for the television program "Roots" (DTH, Feb. 7) suggests that he is treating the series as a historical documentary, but nowhere do any of the writers make this claim. Because of this, Dr. Williamson's criticism should possibly be viewed as literary, not historical. In addition to this point, we also wish to comment on several other aspects.

Dr. Williamson comments that "We've seen their side of the picture." What does he mean by "their side"? The statement implies that "Roots" was only from one perspective or was one-sided. If we accept this point (and we do not), then which side does the professor prefer? Neither the production team nor the viewing audience was totally black. We remind Dr. Williamson that Haley's sub title was "The Saga of an American Family."

Apparently, Dr. Williamson found only one positive aspect of the "Roots" presentation, that being "showing black people's yearning for freedom." What is it about "Roots" that indicates this yearning for freedom better than any other film on

this subject? We feel that many other significant themes were portrayed in "Roots."

Williamson complains that "if the producers of 'Roots' had known the history of blacks in America, they could have depicted a more realistic picture." We want to know how "Roots" could have been presented more realistically on television?

Professor Williamson's interpretation that "Roots" may have left viewers all over America "with the idea that all white Americans before the Civil War were pro-slavery," is not in accordance with our own. In case he missed them, the constant reference to abolitionists and the character Old George clearly indicated that all whites were not pro-slavery.

Williamson's statement that the television production of "Roots" was a historical D- suggests substantive historical differences. However, his criticisms are centered around such trivial points as a discrepancy in the date of Nat Turner's revolt and the timing of the invention of matches.

To use these as arguments is just as

insignificant as arguing over whether "Roots" was shown in seven installments, as the news article suggests, when most viewers would agree that there were eight.

As Dr. Williamson's criticism lacks substance, we can only conclude that his comments are not well founded. Therefore, his grade as a critic of the television presentation of "Roots", from the standpoint of a historian is F+.

Chuck Hopkins Charles O. Walls  
Valice Lescur Taylor Dawne S. Posey  
Robin Neamo BernaDine Ward  
Bobby Best Diane Odum  
Members of Afro-American Studies 61

### Use extreme caution

To the editor:

While no one doubts that the student-run course evaluation program is a useful means for students to communicate with one another about courses and to express their judgments to the faculty, most people realize that extreme caution must be used when reading its statistics.

Further evidence in this direction comes from the results of two exams given in all sections of Mathematics 31 last fall, the placement pretest on algebra and trigonometry and the common final exam. The ratio of the average final exam grade of each section to that section's average pretest grade is a crude measure of the section's gain in knowledge during the semester, adjusted for differences in ability and preparation from one class to another. However, when this index is compared, instructor by instructor, with the "overall teaching effectiveness" ratings from the course questionnaire, striking disagreements appear; in fact, the two measures of teaching effectiveness have a correlation coefficient of -.45. This means that many classes which did very well on the final exam had given their instructors low ratings, while some that rated their instructors high did poorly on the exam.

Thus when students answer the survey's question on "overall teaching effectiveness," many may be thinking of traits not only unrelated to actual teaching effectiveness but perhaps even in opposition to it.

Karl Petersen  
Department of Mathematics

### Try Gertrude Stein

To the editor:

I would like to know something about the speed reading courses presently being debated. I heard a second-hand comment concerning people who take speed reading courses. It seems that once you learn to read 1000+ words per minute (wpm), it is very difficult when you want to read 300 wpm. I can't believe that there are people who can truly enjoy reading everything at 1000-2000 wpm. A summary of an Albee play would be meaningless (and Beckett can not be

summarized). One can not find "key words" and "topic sentences," only key pages and topic paragraphs.

Before I take a speed reading course, I would like to know how easy it is to go back and forth between 1000+ and 300 wpm reading rates.

At present I dislike reading textbooks, and one of my greatest pleasures is reading plays and short stories. If I would lose any of that enjoyment by becoming efficient, then I don't want it.

I am interested in what a person who has taken the course thinks of this idea. Before replying, read a Thurber short story or an essay by Jonathan Swift, then describe how easy and enjoyable it was to read.

Incidentally, if you want to comprehend 1000 wpm while only reading 300, try Gertrude Stein.

Peter Reintjes  
23 Valley Park Dr.

### Generalization and illogic

To the editor:

The duty of the journalist, particularly in America, has long been understood to be that of accurate reporting (ideally) and constructive criticism with the goal of improving society by educating the public and provoking social change. Certainly, the DTH should be considered as journalism, and Tim Smith's article of Feb. 7, on segregation in the Greek system, could be classified as an attempt in that direction. As his article made so abundantly clear, de facto segregation exists in the Greek system—a fact which few people can deny. There are, as

he stated, only three blacks in "white," and no whites in the "black" UNC fraternities. The tone of Tim's article, however, the reasons and motives it suggests are causing segregation, and his equating of segregation with discrimination, constitute misleading generalization and illogic.

Once one circumvents the headlines, which border on sensationalism with their innuendos of bastions of white supremacy and bigotry, he runs into the problem of the unofficial spokespersons quoted as if authorities on the Greek system. Most probably these people accurately express their personal experiences, but these 13 cannot realistically be expected to accurately portray the views of 2,221 men and women (as of Fall 1976) active in the Greek system in 40 different organizations. More likely one would find that Greeks entertain as wide a range of personal opinions and personalities as can be found on this campus.

To the article's suggestion that perhaps there is a clandestine but pervasive policy of segregation or discrimination among Greeks, one can only point to the disunity and diversity of the men and women in the Greek system, the lack of communication between the groups and the fact that there are and have been blacks in "white" fraternities and probably there will continue to be. Any accusation that these are evidence to tokenism can be dispelled because there is no need or pressure in this direction.

Further, something should be said as to the reason for segregation. While there are probably bigots among Greeks just as there are in society generally, one can hardly attribute this segregation solely to racial prejudice. Most likely responsible, is that

fraternities are social organizations, and as such tend to follow the social patterns of society as a whole. People of similar interests and backgrounds tend to associate with one another as it is reinforcing and reassuring to them. For the same reasons that the races do not associate freely in society, right or wrong, fraternities and sororities have failed to integrate. These organizations determine their membership purely on a personal, social basis. As to discrimination, it is doubtful that one can make such a case in the fraternity system. Too often, discrimination is equated with segregation, possibly because of the stigma attached to the "separate but equal doctrine" of the "Jim Crow" era. One should not, however, allow prejudice to distort his judgment of the current situation.

One could not close this letter and miss the opportunity to mention that there are blacks in the Greek system and the black fraternities are equal voting members of the Interfraternity Council (IFC), entitled to all the privileges, offices and services of any members. Currently, the IFC is working to encourage interaction among all fraternities as this, at present, is woefully lacking among both black and white groups. The IFC is also trying to develop a more open rush system as more participation benefits the Greeks as well as allowing more students its benefits.

Finally, one must close by saying that Tim's article may not have been inaccurate as to the existence of a problem, just in its negative emphasis. More careful reporting in the future would better serve good journalism, and the students.

The Executive Board  
Interfraternity Council

## comment

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### Separate cannot be equal

Letters are still trickling into the *Daily Tar Heel* office concerning Tim Smith's article on segregation in the UNC Greek system (Feb. 7), and fingers are pointing in all directions. One reader says that fraternities and sororities don't encourage racial segregation, but the *DTH* does. Another reader invites "any student, black or white, to see for himself if the Greek system, or at least my house is a 'bastion of bigotry.'"

But the fact remains: there are only three blacks in white fraternities, there are no blacks in white sororities, and there are no whites in black fraternities or sororities. Finger-pointing doesn't address this situation, it merely avoids it.

As long as social organizations continue to form along strict racial lines at UNC, there will not be racial equality. History has shown us that separate cannot be equal when one group has a large advantage in numbers and influence over the other. Fraternities and sororities may not be bastions of bigotry, but they are most certainly bastions of racial segregation; and as long as such segregation exists, racial injustice, intentional or unintentional, is likely to exist as well.

It is pointless for us to blame each other for the social barriers that exist between blacks and whites. They were constructed by history, and their existence now may be due only to inertia and not to the efforts of any group of prejudiced individuals. We should use our energies not to quibble over who is holding up the barriers but to remove them. Only by doing this can we hope to eliminate racial injustice and inequality on this campus.

We applaud the reader who tells us that he has gone door to door encouraging blacks as well as whites to attend rush at his fraternity. Such active efforts are necessary to bring about the needed changes in fraternities and sororities, as well as in other social groups. And we decry the fraternity member who tells us that the chances of a black getting into his house are "zero." This attitude serves only to encourage the misconceptions and confusion that hinder justice.

No, David Hair, the *Daily Tar Heel* is not antifraternity. There are far more Greeks on the *DTH* staff than there are blacks—just another example of the deep racial segregation on campus. But it is past time for all of us to become aware of the situation and to do what we can to right it.

## ERA—a new frontier

"The French Revolution gradually ushered in an age of political equality, but the times have changed, and that by itself is not enough today. The boundaries of democracy have to be widened now so as to include economic equality also. This is the great revolution through which we are all passing."  
—Jawaharlal Nehru (1939)

## The Daily Tar Heel

84th Year of Editorial Freedom

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### Harvard demands less of faculty

## Challenge—finding scholars who are teachers

By JOHN C. LUCCHESI

In recent weeks, various articles in the *Daily Tar Heel* have dealt in some fashion or other with the subject of teaching. The question of its relative importance in the eyes of the University Administration has been raised; just as often, the lack of recognition and of rewards for good teachers has been suggested. This editorial trend moved me to organize and put down on paper some recurring thoughts on the role of universities in our modern society. My intention is to offer a different perspective than the one which may be commonly held by most students and many professors on the teaching role of the University. I would like to propose that the circumstances of our particular campus are such that we cannot permit ourselves to be thinkers, researchers or innovators who cannot or will not teach; nor can we afford teachers who do not contribute to the conceptual enlargement of their field.

Given the decline of the Catholic Church and the advent of the Industrial Revolution, I would venture to say that the university is the last bastion for culture and civilization in our western world. The teaching performed at a university worthy of its name should strive to fulfill the awesome commitment placed upon the institution by society. It should be directed toward chosen students, carefully selected for their intellectual ability and innate curiosity—for their promise to become, in time, the nurturers of culture and the custodians of civilization. Undergraduates of this caliber are capable of the personal effort necessary to learn from any professor. The sole requirement placed upon the latter is that he be among the intellectual leaders of his field. Such universities exist: Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Wisconsin, Berkeley, to name a few. They educate, train and inspire young artists, historians, philosophers, jurists, physicians, scientists, etc.

When an institution engages in the public education of large numbers of citizens, it must, by the very nature of its constituent student body, employ individuals who are trained in the special techniques of verbal or

audiovisual communication. These skills are needed to inculcate knowledge into a broad distribution of students, the majority of whom are, by definition, of average intelligence, average curiosity and average motivation. When the dissemination of popularized knowledge becomes the sole or even primary purpose, the institution soon loses its character and quality. Such places abound; they are the large, amorphous campuses of many state systems.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is in a most difficult position. On the one hand, it counts among its faculty numerous individuals with established national or international reputations as leading thinkers in their respective fields. It cannot, therefore, avoid its

responsibility to be a true and great university. On the other hand, the good people of our state seem to have decreed that the Chapel Hill campus must engage, to a rather substantial degree, in the dissemination of popularized knowledge. On the one hand, we must discharge our obligations to the taxpayers; on the other, we must serve the greater purpose that we sense is ours. A possible solution to this dilemma would be to have two classes of faculty member: some whose primary responsibility is scholarly works, others whose primary duty is teaching. This would, of course, require a complete restructuring of the procedures and criteria for evaluating performance and of the promotion and reward system. Were it to occur, its most obvious and costly consequence would be the

isolation of the faculty scholars and researchers from all students, including those with unusual intellectual ability. The latter would suffer the most since they would have benefited the most from associations with such staff members. An alternative solution is to seek out and retain faculty members who are contributing scholars as well as effective teachers. This, in essence, means that we are forced to demand and expect more of our own academicians than would be the case at any of the great institutions mentioned above. Ironic? Indeed. Unrealistic? Perhaps. Nevertheless, it is only through the most unrelenting adherence to this *modus operandi* that we can hope to endure.

Dr. John C. Lucchesi is the director of the curriculum in biology.

## Drys have 'Little Johnny' First in freedom, last in liquor

By DAN FESPERMAN

When North Carolina Baptists drove the statewide liquor-by-the-drink referendum into submission in 1974, Little Johnny received much of the credit, or at least he should have.

Little Johnny, a hypothetical North Carolina youngster, pedaled his way into many hearts on a wobbly bicycle.

Johnny, it seemed, was headed down the street toward doom at the hands of a drunken driver. At the commercial's final moment, there was a great squealing of brakes and blurring of the picture as the soused driver supposedly pulled the curtains on Johnny.

The state watched the ad, began fearing for its own little Johnnies, and emotionally registered their fear at the polls.

A recent survey conducted for the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, though, has shown that Johnny was hypothetical in more ways than one.

In states where liquor-by-the-drink has been passed into law, the study shows that statewide consumption of the supposedly Johnny-killing beverage

stays the same. In other words, if people are going to tie one on, they don't let a lack of good bars stop them; they'll just as soon do it at home or at a party.

Another debunked myth is the belief that liquor-by-the-drink increases the number of drivers on the highways. The study shows this to be false.

So what's to stop the passage of liquor-by-the-drink now? With Little Johnny safely debunked as a real person, shouldn't it now be easy to defeat the forces of the dries?

Not quite. They'll simply dust Johnny off, pat him on the back and send him wobbling down the road once again to meet the same liquor-crazed driver's bumper. And will North Carolina know the difference this time? Possibly, but there will doubtless be large groups of those who let their misguided emotions get the best of them again and vote "no" for Little Johnny's sake.

If so, North Carolina's metropolitan areas will continue to waste their vast potential for attracting conventions, shows and classy night spots. All of these thrive on moisture, so to speak, and this state's dryness has always tended to scare them away.

The especially painful example of this wasted potential has been the Charlotte

Civic Center. In the heart of the world's largest non-liquor-by-the-drink city, this multi-million dollar-building has been avoided in droves by conventions.

But if liquor-by-the-drink is defeated again, probably the most disturbing thing will be that North Carolina will remain one of only two such states in the country.

It will only be when North Carolinians realize that Little Johnny will always hit the bumper, regardless of where the driver gets drunk, that they decide to remove the distinction of "First in Freedom, Last in Liquor."

Dan Fesperman is a senior journalism major from Charlotte, N.C.

The *Daily Tar Heel* welcomes letters to the editor. Letters must be typed, double spaced, on a 60-space line and are subject to editing for libelous content or bad taste.

Letters that run over 25 lines (150 words) are subject to condensation. Letters should be mailed to the editor, *Daily Tar Heel*, Carolina Union.

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"COME ON OUT AGAIN, MR. GROUNDHOG — I PLEDGE MY FIFTY DOLLAR REBATE TOWARD GIVING YOU A DECENT FUNERAL!"