

The Daily Tar Heel

93rd year of editorial freedom

ARNT ROKKER AND DAVID SCHMIDT

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Death, be not allowed

The life of Alton Eugene Harris Jr. has been spared. And so — for the moment, in this instance — is the moral foundation of human society.

But by citing "mitigating factors" to substantiate its decision, the jury left the moral standard as disgraced as the convicted murderer.

The death penalty is wrong not because of poor living conditions, or mental disorders, or any other excuses. It's wrong because the highest value of civilization must be the sanctity of human life. All human life. Without such regard, any laws, rights and goals meant to enhance life are as much dust.

Arguments against the societal costs of supporting prisoners like Harris are irrelevant, too. Society doesn't even have the right to exist if an individual does not have that right. Besides, it costs more to execute a prisoner, with a dozen appeal options, than to support him through a life sentence. And programs that release prisoners convicted of non-violent crimes into community work show promise of reducing the burden on prisons and lowering costs.

The supposed cost of letting murder go unpunished by death in regards to deterrence also is a fallacy. Nowhere has the death penalty been successfully

correlated with significantly lower murder rates.

Moral value is the question. And it's too easy for juries, such as the one for the Harris trial, to ignore it — to evade the fact that they are the executioners. How many would vote for the death penalty if each was required to stand in a firing squad, with every gun loaded and aimed at the defendant? They should have no problem pulling the trigger. They should be glad to show they respect life so much that they're willing to defend it's sanctity, that they're even willing to kill for it.

The way to defend a value, and the way to get others to respect it, is to uphold the value.

This is not to forbid executions entirely. If someone facing life imprisonment with no parole chooses the death penalty instead, the choice should be honored. The decision is his to make. Not a jury's.

Killing, not drugs, was Alton Harris' mental disorder. He should be punished severely, and he will. But if the "mitigating factors" hadn't existed, the jury would have been victim to the same mental disorder. Two wrongs don't make a right.

Debatable Soviet aid

Last night's debate between a traveling team of Soviet graduate students and a select team of UNC debaters left one question unanswered — the subject of the debate. Neither side examined the reason for their presence on the stage, the extent of the superpowers' responsibilities to developing countries.

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Upper Volta lack ports, oil, valuable minerals, even tense borders with important neighbors. In the past year, massive hunger has inspired a U.S. outpouring of more than \$3 billion in food aid. The Soviet Union has given less than France, Great Britain, Canada, India, Zimbabwe...

Zimbabwe? More than a decade of civil war has wracked the one-time bastion of racism. This year's plentiful crop comes only after several years of severe drought. Yet Zimbabwe still gives more than a country supporting the world's largest army.

One excuse offered for this travesty by apologists for the Soviet Union is the poor performance of Soviet agriculture. Yes, the country does have to import wheat from the United States because of the appalling inefficiency of its own collectivized farms. But billions also go to propping up Soviet allies around the Third World, such friendly folks as Afghan quisling Babrak Karmal and Cuban dictator Fidel Castro. These aid funds have not been spent buying food for those who really need it.

Although the ungenerous Soviet Union would probably never agree to such a project, what we need is a program of matching aid to non-aligned nations. European media attention would give the aid a certain propaganda value for the Soviet Union. Even if the aid were matched in the ratios of the U.S. and Soviet economies, the result would be a big improvement on the present state of affairs.



READER FORUM

Courtroom, not pulpit, will decide obscenity

To the editors:
As I began to read the two columns on the pornography law in the DTH, I was immediately struck by the fact that the second article was written by Thomas Jackson ("Moral decree good for state," Oct. 10). Seeing that Jackson functions as co-chairman of Students For America, I wondered how far I would read into the column before religion, and not the new pornography law, became the issue. I was not disappointed.

How Jackson meandered from "The new pornography law has been criticized for being too strict, even ridiculous," to "What are you going to do about the fact that Jesus Christ died for you?" completely escaped me. Despite SFA's dream of an American theocracy, religion is not a formal component of either the initial legislative process or any subsequent judicial reviews of a statute. Remember separation of church and state? The criticisms

against the new pornography laws should not raise religious issues, but instead, constitutional questions.

We are talking of First Amendment rights. Even if a majority of Americans decide against all "obscene" materials of any sort, the burning issue left is whether or not the publication, distribution and possession of pornography is a right conferred by the First Amendment. The rights recognized by the Constitution apply to state law as well by virtue of the 14th Amendment.

Granted, the state legislature can pass restrictions that protect a legitimate state interest. In the case of North Carolina, the interest needing protection is primarily that of children and the need to keep them free from the horrible damages of sexual exploitation. The legitimate interest is not whether God damns pornographers or that Jesus died on the cross to prevent adult bookstores. The criticism of the new statutes does and should focus on

whether the state has infringed on personal rights and freedoms in its attempt to protect a legitimate state interest.

But even where Jackson makes his leap of illogic from what should be an argumentative essay to a fire-and-brimstone tirade, his points prove weak at best.

Perhaps there is a relation of higher sex-crime frequency corresponding to the availability of explicit materials. Studies on just that point have contradicting results. The truth is, crimes of a sexual nature existed before the invention of the printed word or pornography. Immoral sex runs throughout the Bible. Pornography did not create deviancy; it was a product of deviancy. Stopping the distribution of adult products will not, in turn, stop rape.

"It all starts with one look." So please, everyone, keep your lights off. After we shut down the adult entertainment industry, sex will

disappear because no one will have seen it.

Finally, Jackson betrays his own cause through his own choice of language. Pornography leads its victims "into a deeper and deeper pit, like an insatiable hunger?" Thomas, your Freudian slip is showing.

The First Amendment allows a lot of things we would rather not see or read: witness your Hell-and-damnation sermon, the constitutional determination of the new N.C. obscenity laws will be decided in a courtroom, not from a pulpit.

Richard Wilkinson
Carrboro

Makes sense!

To the editors:
Many people are fearing a Homecoming blowout at the hands of Florida State University on Oct. 26. A severe defeat would certainly dampen Homecoming activities. However, the way I see it, it is Carolina that will enjoy a hearty victory and a happy Homecoming.

Tennessee beat Wake Forest by 2, and UNC beat Wake by 20, so naturally UNC could beat Tennessee by 18.

Tennessee beat Auburn by 15; therefore, UNC would beat Auburn by 33.

Since Auburn beat Florida State by 32, it logically follows that UNC will destroy Florida State by 65.

Greg Smith
Greensboro

CORRECTION

In Steve Matheny's column "U.S. has collective responsibility to God" (Oct. 14), a sentence in the first paragraph should have read:

Perhaps this evokes the danger that another like Martin Luther might come along, claim the Bible to be "the sole rule of authority and practice over all life," and by doing so, transform the total character of the age in which he lives.

The quote was attributable to the 16th-century Protestant, not the 20th-century minister. The DTH regrets the editing error.

Christianity not the only way of life

To the editors:

Steve Matheny seems to think that it is impossible to be a complete person without being Christian. He writes, "Being a Christian is the only thing that can bring lasting joy, hope and peace to an individual's life" ("U.S. has collective responsibility to God," Oct. 14). This is an absurd notion. Believe it or not, it is possible to enjoy life without being Christian. I am not a Christian, but I can assure Matheny that my life is full of joy, hope and peace.

Matheny believes that Christianity enables people to know that God loves them despite their sins because Jesus died for their transgressions. According to Matheny, God forgives Christian sinners, even murderers and thieves. But what about Jews, Moslems and other non-Christians? Are they to be condemned to Hell simply because their beliefs in God differ from Christianity? Matheny's attitude is condescending and completely intolerant of religions other than Christianity.

Has he forgotten that Jesus was a Jew?

I am glad that Matheny finds Christianity to be a fulfilling way of life. I only ask that he recognize that Christianity is not the only relevant philosophy of life. Contrary to Matheny's view, it is possible to lead an enjoyable and moral life without being Christian.

Jon Oberlander
Hinton James

3 cheers for administrative stickler

To the editors:

When we returned to UNC this fall, we were appalled to find that our cute little student ID validation stickers had been replaced by some green monstrosities in plastic encasings. What the hell was wrong with the cute little stickers? These damn green things do nothing but get in the way and are a nuisance to keep up with.

For example, I lost that stupid green thing, but not the ID itself. So what, you say. I'll tell you: I can't

get anything from anywhere. Do they not think I'm a student? Why the hell else would I want to check out an astrophysics textbook on reserve? If we had gotten our cute little stickers this year, there would have been no problem; you can't lose them because they're stuck.

Now, since I don't have the bucks to buy a new ID, I'm forced to blow off a whole semester of required readings. And I can't get tickets to the games either because you have to show all three IDs, when the

athletic pass has all the information that the green monstrosity has that proves you are a student.

Three cheers for the administration for screwing up. We want our stickers back, dammit! Join us in the Pit Thursday for the first rally of Students For Stickers. Bring your IDs. We're gonna burn 'em.

Patrick Vernon
Keith DeLancey
Kingswood Apts.

Palestinians fight for non-oppression

By JOHN G. GIRAGOS JR.

'Terrorism is wrong, regardless of political affiliation.'

As a Western society, America is subjected to a Western press which is often unintentionally inaccurate in its reporting of a situation overseas, and thus, in being inaccurate, is one-sided.

Recently, terrorist actions in the Middle East have been the topic of discussion and coverage on television, in conversation and in periodicals. The DTH has published various comments on the terrorist situation in the Middle East, but these viewpoints have unintentionally omitted, I believe, crucial data. The Oct. 9 letter "PLO games shouldn't go unpunished" accurately speaks of past Palestine Liberation Organization terrorist acts. The opinion failed, however, to recognize that there have been terrorist acts perpetrated by the Israeli government and by some of its citizens which are similarly malicious and offensive.

The acts are many and are not generally known, as the press does not make frequent reference to them. In 1948, the Irgun and Stern Gang (now-dismantled; pre-Israel Zionist movement group) invaded the Arab village of Deir Yassin and slaughtered 254 inhabitants, 100 of whom were women and children. In 1953, a 600-man battalion of the Israeli Army attacked the West Bank village of Qibya. Sixty-six men, women and children were killed. In 1956, 49 farmers returning to the Arab village of Kafr Qasem in the Sinai Peninsula were killed without warning by the Israeli Frontier Guard. In 1966, Sammu in Jordan was attacked — 18 civilians killed, 130 wounded, 125 houses including the school, clinic and mosque demolished.

There has been an abundance of acts documented by U.S. government agencies reporting similar terrorism since 1967. Specifically in the past few years, some Israeli citizens have formed terrorist bands similar to those many Arab terrorist groups that have formed of autonomous of the PLO. The Israeli bands, like their Arab counterparts, are responsible for many of the terrorist activities now experienced in the Middle East. In 1982, attempts to explode Al-Aqsa Mosque in East Jerusalem were interrupted; in separate incidents, three Palestinian youths of the West Bank were shot. Evidence indicates their murders have not and will not be brought to trial. Incidents in 1983 included the killing of a nine-year-old Palestinian Nablus girl and several grenade/bomb explosions against Palestinians. Last year, a student from Nablus was foudled decapitated. A Bir Zeit University professor was taken from his home by unidentified men, and his body was found 16 days later. And now we see the Israeli raid on PLO headquarters in Tunisia in which more than 60 were killed.

Such information of past and present actions against the Palestinians is not commonly found on the evening news or in the paper. Very evident is the news coverage of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 was the shallow treatment of the Arab civilian casualties. While hundreds were killed due to Israeli aggressions in Lebanon, news coverage repeatedly showed us not the Arab dead but the mourning of the comparatively small

handful of equally unfortunate Israeli deaths. ABC News even met with great disapproval from pro-Israeli groups in reaction to its more Arab-sympathetic reporting of the invasion. Furthermore, attempts to provide a more accurate picture of the Middle East often seem to meet with several impedances as evidenced by the killing of two newsmen in southern Lebanon by Israeli troops and by the Israeli-enforced restriction on journalists in certain areas in south Lebanon.

Palestinian armed struggle should not be dismissed so quickly as blatantly offensive acts. Thorough investigation will reveal that there is a growing history of Israeli actions against the Palestinians which have often led to Israeli victimization. But as there are Israeli victims, there are also Palestinian/Arab victims. If one regards one side of this insane conflict as terrorist, one must likewise view the other as terrorist.

But terrorism is wrong, regardless of political affiliation. What should be realized is that armed struggle is a desperate people's final resort to try to ameliorate an overwhelming situation in which they are wrongly oppressed. In school we have studied the resort to armed struggle of the colonial American, the American Indian and the black South African. Just as these peoples were or are inspired by attaining freedom from oppression, so, too, are the Palestinian people struggling for their freedom from oppression.

John G. Giragos Jr. is a freshman biology major from Durham.

The Daily Tar Heel

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