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The Daily Tar Heel

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A lesson in service

It's becoming increasingly difficult for students to receive need-based scholarships and financial aid to attend college. The federal government has a responsibility to help ease restrictions and eliminate the burdensome bureaucracy to ensure easy access to all students to obtain financial assistance.

Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton has proposed the development of a plan to make it easier for students to receive college loans. Under his plan, students would be allowed to borrow more money for school and to repay the loans after graduation in one of two ways: by deducting payments from income tax returns or by taking a job in public service immediately after graduation. Both of these proposed methods are feasible.

The federal government has had numerous problems with students defaulting on their college loans. Without question, a great number of graduates demonstrate poor responsibility and lack of commitment to the financial assistance programs by not paying the loans back.

But under Clinton's plan, it would be difficult for graduates to default on their loans primarily because

repayment conditions allow no room for default. If a student chooses not to take a job in public service, his or her loan payments will be deducted from income tax returns. No matter what, the loan will be paid back.

In the UNC system, the N.C. Teaching Fellows Program operates similarly to the public service aspect of Clinton's plan. Teaching Fellows provides scholarships for students to attend school for four years with expenses paid. Upon graduation, these Teaching Fellows must teach for a specified number of years in public school classrooms across North Carolina. Additionally, the armed services provide a similar assistance in their ROTC programs. Service programs do work.

Naturally, this plan requires more debate and investigation. But on its face, the proposal provides an alternative means by which students may pay back loans. The feature of public service is a long-term investment. And perhaps most important, it is encouraging to those who would not otherwise attend college for fear of unemployment and inability to pay off loans after graduation.

Don't leave family out of family values

President Bush proclaims himself to be the "family values" president. The U.S. Congress is calling him on it.

Last week, Congress passed the Family and Medical Leave Act, which would allow employees to take as much as 12 weeks of unpaid leave for medical emergencies. Bush has vowed to veto the bill, just as he did in 1990 to a similar bill.

For Bush, whose campaign made family values an issue in this year's election, a veto would not only be presidential suicide, but also hypocritical. How can someone travel across America preaching about the importance of keeping the family together and oppose a bill whose aim is to do just that?

The facts are simple: As more and more working women enter the work force, job security becomes an increasingly important issue. And as more professional women decide to take a step toward motherhood, first-time parents should be able to enjoy their new arrival.

The Family and Medical Leave Act does something that both President Bush and Vice President Dan Quayle have failed to do — provide a concrete,

systematic solution preserving the American family.

Under the act:

- Workers could take as much as 12 weeks of unpaid leave to care for a new or adopted child or for a serious illness affecting the employee, a spouse, child or parent.

- Companies with fewer than 50 employees would be exempt.

- Workers must give 30 days notice for non-emergency leave and must have worked an average of 25 hours per week during the previous year to be eligible.

The argument by President Bush and other opponents of the bill that a government-mandated policy would be costly and lead to job losses is unfounded.

The Family and Medical Leave Act only would affect about 5 percent of U.S. employers and half of this country's work force. And for an employee who has rendered years of valuable service to a company, the legislation is only a small thank you; so much more is deserved.

It's time for the president to put the family back in family values.

Admit it: A generally good policy

The character of Carolina football games has been changed for students — and changed for the better.

The Carolina Athletic Association has a new policy for distribution of tickets: All student tickets are general admission, except for those groups who opt for block seating. If a few minor bugs are ironed out, the new policy should enhance an already awesome experience.

With general admission there will be:

- No more great seats going unused because ticket holders are too hung-over, lazy or unmotivated to get there before halftime.

- No more people who don't like the mikeman's enthusiasm forced to sit in the lower level. They can sit in the upper deck (where such lackluster, no spirit, "Why don't you just stay home, you sorry excuse for a Tar Heel?" fans belong) and not feel compelled to vandalize the public address system.

- More support for the team in the early part of the game since true fans will be brought in early by the incentive of great seats.

- Fewer intoxicated students having to figure out difficult concepts like the order of the alphabet in order to know where to sit, and

- No more students being relegated to end-zone

seats because they want to forgo an extra trip to the Smith Center a week early for a ticket.

In fact, the only real drawback to general admission is that the battle for prime seats led some students to sit in blocks that had been reserved ahead of time.

But, according to CAA officials, that problem will be corrected for next week's game as spectators will see ropes marking off the location of the block seating.

The only other problem with the new policy is that it makes it slightly more difficult for UNC students to get free tickets for friends who are visiting from home or other schools.

While technically improper, the practice of smuggling in non-student friends is as old as football games themselves and should not be too much impaired.

On a more serious note, the new general admission policy is a boon for students who go to Kenan to watch the game and doesn't hurt those who go only to socialize.

Rah, rah, CAA.
Go Heels!!!
Go to hell, State.



Speak up! Respect the power, beauty of words

Peripheral filtering is how behaviorists describe what we higher animals do when our senses are numbed by boredom. When we become accustomed to a steady tone or a constant buzzing, we inevitably ignore it and eventually tune it out. Simple, monotonous stimuli fade away as we focus our attention on the immediate and the complex.

We become aware of the classroom air conditioner's steady hum only when someone turns it off. Suddenly the room seems quiet, and yet it was never noisy. On a busy street garbage trucks are beeping, cars are speeding by, and the masses are walking, eating and talking. Again we do not notice the commotion until it's gone, when the street is still and silent.

Our daily routine is, of course, a rush of emptiness, performed mechanically and without thought. No one really ponders the shower in the morning, the key in the door, the walk to class or the trip to the bank machine. These tasks are rote and fade easily from our thoughts. As with the air conditioner and the noisy street, we pay attention to the commonplace and the routine only when they are disturbed or disrupted. Otherwise our attention is with the problems of the day, with things exciting and momentous.

But ironically, it is the most common aspect of our daily routine that we should not ignore or tune out, on which our thoughts should, in fact, be focused. I speak, of course, of speaking, of writing and of listening: the basic tools of language. Language is our cultural currency; its value far exceeds the context in which it is so commonly used.

Paint and canvas do not together make a painting without the artist's vision, the direction of her brush strokes and the mood of her soul. Music without skill and style, without the composer's sensitive ear and the rhythms of his heart, is nothing but a random collection of noises. Likewise, language is empty without forethought, without direction and purpose. Its everyday usage becomes bland and mechanical, vulgar

and crude.

Perhaps because we use it so much, and so mundanely, we become less aware of the flow of language, its intricacy, its complexity and its elegance. As with the air conditioner and the noisy street, we are reminded of the presence and power of language only when its steady flow is disturbed, when average words become extraordinary.

Vladimir Nabokov knew this well and responded brilliantly. In the opening paragraph of his book *Lolita*, Nabokov seizes his reader's attention with simple words arranged in a deliberate, perhaps lustful rhythm. He wrote: "Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul. Lo-lee-ta: the tip of the tongue taking a trip of three steps down the palate to tap, at three, on the teeth. Lo. Lee. Ta."

Nabokov was able to turn rote to rhythm, and style to success; he disrupted the commonplace to his advantage. But his is a rare case; many others disrupt language negatively, to their great disadvantage.

Excuse me for juxtaposing mastery with, shall we admit it, mediocrity, but consider if you will these remarks by our president, George Bush. Of his opponent, President Bush said to a group of newspaper editors: "Judy, listen, why should I say something nice about a man I like, which I do? But, listen, he's not without redemption.... But in terms of personal kind of guy, nice fellow."

George Bush's political speech is faltering and shaky. He is a terrible extemporaneous speaker because his presidency is without direction and purpose. More crisis manager than visionary, more steward of his office than leader, Bush does not have any of the clear, firmly held beliefs of his predecessor. Consequently, Bush lacks



Eric Wagner
Mind's Eye

Reagan's clear oration skills; his confused sputterings announce loudly: "I'm a loser."

Language's political power goes far beyond George Bush's silly gaffes. The issue of "politically correct" speech has been addressed, and rightly criticized, in this space and elsewhere. To be fair, the PC issue has received much more attention than its original proponents had ever intended, or probably deserved. After all, none of the PC maestros are seriously proposing, say, a radical redistribution of national wealth, a shifting of American foreign policy or an end to speeding tickets. At the heart of the argument are not the issues that matter, but rather the words we use to describe them.

A large number of Mexican nationals have crossed the border into California, without, to be polite, permission from the state. And although this illegal immigration has strained California's schools, hospitals and welfare system tremendously, the debate seems to center not so much on the issues as on how to refer to the issues. So Californians are asking: Is that uninvited guest an illegal alien or an undocumented migrant? Both euphemisms describe the same person, of course, but one supposes guilt and the other innocence. The first, by implication, is negative, the latter, intuitively, is positive.

Language used to be a sign of power, prestige and intellect. In the old days, mastery of Latin, Greek and Hebrew was a requisite of formal scholarship. Yet today we do not pay attention to language unless George Bush mangles it or a PC advocate absurdly twists its meaning. Sadly, we are left with language that is exceptional only when it is crude and nonsensical. But language is both a powerful tool and an object of beauty; let's treat it with respect by demanding style and substance, clarity and direction.

Eric Wagner is a senior biology and political science major from Jerusalem.

READERS' FORUM

Rape isn't a racial issue: Women fear all strangers

To the editor:

I take issue with Reginald O'Rourke's recent article ("Black men assaulted by suspicion, fear," Sept. 8). If I carry a mace and avoid walking near unknown men when I am alone, it is because I am a woman who rightly fears for her safety, not because I am a racist. Crime certainly isn't limited to one ethnic group, even in Chapel Hill. One suspect in multiple assaults who has his composite posted all over campus is, in fact, a white man. Under these conditions, it is impossible for any woman to trust any male stranger, no matter what color they are. Mr. O'Rourke, if I keep my distance from you on the sidewalk, it is because of your gender, not your race. You, as a black man, and I, as a white woman, are both victims of different kinds of oppression — or perhaps you are indirectly a victim of my oppression in this case. We should fight together against oppression in all its forms, and it only shows a lack of understanding for you to accuse me, when the real criminals are the men who commit violent crimes against women.

ELIZA FERGUSON
Senior

International studies and history

Helmets, education will enhance bicycle safety

To the editor:

I'd like to comment on and clarify several points in your editorial "On the road to safety." Unless I'm in error, the youth killed was 8 years old. Your piece implies by using the word "accident" that some uncontrollable act took place that led to his death. In fact, the crash involved a specific sequence of events that were, in this case, easily avoidable. Prior traffic safety education perhaps could have taught him to look both ways before leaving the driveway. You also imply that a bicycle lane is a fifth lane. Please realize that a two-

way bicycle lane or path on or parallel to a road is very dangerous and is no longer within engineering guidelines. What is more appropriate are bicycle lanes on both sides of the road. Bicycles should always ride with traffic.

Another misconception is that sidewalks are safe. In fact, while they do offer separation from traffic, they cause their own set of safety problems due to cross traffic and conflict with pedestrians.

The town already has won a \$4,000 grant from the Office for Prevention and is looking into the best way to purchase and distribute the helmets that will be purchased.

I do agree with your basic premise that the state and town need to implement engineering efforts to ensure bicyclist safety. Both of these governments have been receptive, particularly Chapel Hill. But facilities take time and money, albeit several orders of magnitude less than is required for the automobile infrastructure.

In the meantime, and in addition to any facilities improvements, bicyclists should protect themselves by following traffic law, learning specific safe riding techniques and wearing a helmet. It's the best protection in case of an "accident."

WAYNE PEIN
Chairman, Chapel Hill Bicycling Advisory Committee

Stage fright at concert made question difficult

To the editor:

I am writing in response to Lindsay Lowry's wonderful article about the Veldt in the Omnibus ("The Veldt at the Cradle..." Sept. 10) She really did her homework. When I was reading the review, I felt like I was back at the concert.

Until the end of the article, that is. You see, I was that woman who got pulled up on stage. I suppose I could lecture Lindsay about how dumbfounding stage fright is, or how journalists thoroughly should research their sub-

jects (i.e. ask questions). I could even complain about how the press spends all their time informing people about their ignorance rather than giving them the information to correct the situation.

But the truth is that I did hesitate. I hesitated because the question's phrasing led me to believe that Daniel wanted two living important black leaders. I probably could not have named two living black leaders that I esteem without about two hours of thought on the subject.

In spite of the way Lindsay portrayed the situation, I do agree with her that on the subject of contemporary African-American political leaders I was ignorant. So I went to the library and educated myself. Mayor David Dinkins, Governor Douglas Wilder, Maxine Waters, Harvey Gantt, Mayor Maynard Jackson, Mayor Tom Bradley.

I am sure there are many more, and I can assure you I will look for others. And Lindsay, I'll make a deal with you — I'll be more aware of African-American leaders and issues if you will try not to assume that everyone else is ignorant and unconcerned with problem's facing today's society just because they pause to think when pulled up on stage at a concert.

EMILY WALSH
Sophomore
Biology

Letters policy

The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments and criticisms. We attempt to print as many letters to the editor as space permits. When writing letters, please follow these guidelines:

- Letters should be limited to 400 words. Shorter letters have a better chance of running.
- If you want your letter published, sign and date it. No more than two signatures.
- All letters must be typed and double-spaced.
- Include your year in school, major, phone number and hometown.

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The Daily Tar Heel

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