

Panel discusses gay, lesbian political roles

By Steve Robblee
Staff Writer

A panel of gay and lesbian elected officials, including mayors, state representatives and even a former Miss Lesbian from the state of Maine, spoke to a standing-room-only crowd in the Student Union Friday.

The event, which was held in 206 Union and drew about 35 people, was a panel discussion on the 1992 election sponsored by Bisexuals, Gay Men, Lesbians and Allies for Diversity and the newly formed Gay and Lesbian Law Students Association.

The panel of 15 politicians included Tom Nolan, a member of the San Mateo, Calif., county board of supervisors; Dale McCormick, a state senator from Maine; John Heilman, mayor of West Hollywood, Calif.; and Cal Anderson, a state representative from Washington.

The discussion began with the question of how recent college graduates could become involved in local, state and national politics.

"Don't wait for anybody to ask you (to run for office)," Nolan said. "We have to make it our turn. It never seems to be our turn until we take it."

Bob Gentry, the mayor of Laguna Beach, Calif., and a faculty member at the University of California at Irvine, said colleges and universities were good places for students to gain experience that would help them if they decided to run for political office later in life.

"It's a wonderful place to experience grass-roots politics at its best and worst," Gentry said.

Panelists also discussed the advantages of being a gay or lesbian politician.

"Being openly gay has opened far more doors than it's closed," Nolan said.

John Laird, former mayor of Santa Cruz, Calif., and Anderson both agreed.

"When I was elected mayor in 1983, people said, 'Geez, if you'll tell us the truth about that, you'll tell us the truth about anything,'" Laird said.

Anderson said that when he first was

elected a state representative, The Seattle Times ran a two-page spread about him because he was the first openly gay person to be elected to a state office. Other politicians were jealous about the publicity he was getting, he said.

An audience member asked the panel when would be the best time to "come out" publicly, either for political office or simply for potential employers.

McCormick said she thought the decision to tell employers should depend on what the job demanded.

"I think you should emphasize (your homosexuality) if it's a plus in the job, and de-emphasize it if it's not," she said, adding that it was usually not appropriate for heterosexuals to emphasize their sexual preference, either.

The political forum was the first event sponsored by the month-old Gay and Lesbian Law Students Association, which has not yet received official University recognition.

Lisa Grafstein, a member of GALLSA, said the University soon would recognize the group. "It's just a

matter of the paperwork going through," she said.

Grafstein said that Chapel Hill Town Council member Joseph Herzenberg was instrumental in bringing the politicians to Chapel Hill. They were in town for an annual conference of openly elected gay and lesbian politicians that was held at the Carolina Inn Saturday and Sunday.

The conference is in its eighth year, and Chapel Hill is the smallest place it has ever been held, Grafstein said.

Bob Gentry said the conference was important for gay and lesbian politicians because it was the only time they could discuss their experiences with one another.

"We have met this weekend every year for eight years," he said. "It's probably the highlight of most of our years because it's the only time when we, as openly elected gay and lesbian elected and appointed officials, can come and be together in the same room, share our lives, our stories, our hopes, our dreams and our challenges with each other."

Faith followers work toward unity of races

By Monica Brown
Staff Writer

It has a significant following in 205 countries and territories worldwide, and more than 2,100 different ethnic groups are represented in its more than 5 million followers.

The Baha'i Faith is one of the most widespread religions in the world, second in geographic spread only to Christianity.

Kathy Lee, vice chairwoman and treasurer of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Baha'i Local Spiritual Assembly, said the main teachings of the Baha'i Faith were to "establish the oneness of mankind, develop the qualities of God in both our public and private lives, to worship and love God, and to contribute to the advancement of civilization."

"The Baha'i Faith wants to maintain diversity in life as well as establish its oneness," Lee said.

The religion teaches unity and oneness at all levels, she said. Baha'is believe that humanity is one race and the earth should unify into one global society. They think that the barriers of race, class, creed and nation are breaking down and will eventually create a universal civilization.

The Baha'i Faith began in 1844, when an Iranian merchant, known as the Bab, proclaimed the advent of a new religious revelation. He declared that his purpose was to prepare humanity for the advent of a new messenger from God. Among his followers was Mirza Husayn-Ali, known as Baha'u'llah. In 1863, Baha'u'llah declared that he was the messenger foretold by the Bab. The followers of Baha'u'llah became known as Baha'is.

Meetings of the Baha'is in Chapel Hill and Carrboro consist of three parts: a devotional with music and prayer; the consultation, during which issues are brought up and discussed; and a socialization period, said local Baha'i Farzeen Barzandeh.

The nine leaders of the local Baha'i group are elected by the Baha'is annually by secret ballot.

There are no clergy in the Baha'i Faith, said Radhance Hartman, a part-time UNC student. "A human being cannot intervene between ourself and God."

There are about eight Baha'is on campus, but the Baha'i club is dormant now, said Noah Bartolucci, president of the UNC Baha'i Club. Last year, the club sponsored dialogues on the healing of racism in the world.

"We want to build a new world order designed to focus on the development of every human being," Lee said. "Racism is the most important social issue that we face today. The Baha'is have been working since the early 1900s to address this."

"Whether it be nationality, class, gender or age, any reason people have to feel superior to others must be eliminated. We are working to bring blacks and whites together in the Baha'i context."

Bartolucci agrees. "We have to appreciate what everyone has to offer to the whole. A key focus of the Baha'is is race-unity efforts."

Although the Baha'i Faith stresses diversity, all of the Baha'is on campus are either white or of Persian descent. But the racial breakdown is more diverse in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro community, Hartman said. "There are Persians, blacks and whites. There are also a lot of black Baha'is in Durham," she said. Lee estimated that about 40 percent of the Baha'is in Chapel Hill and Durham were black and that 60 percent were white.

April 1992 to April 1993 is a holy year for the Baha'is, marking the 100-year anniversary of Baha'u'llah's death. The Baha'is are holding a World Congress today through Thursday in New York City. Event coordinators are expecting to draw about 30,000 Baha'is from all over the world.

Hartman planned to make the trip to New York. "The vision that Baha'u'llah had of world peace gives me hope in the world today," she said.

"It's really good for a young person to have that kind of hope."

Pauper Players serve up delicious comedy with 'Little Shop'

"Feed me Seymour!" begged the huge green plant in Pauper Players' rendition of "Little Shop of Horrors" this weekend.

And feed him they did. Meanwhile, they treated the audience to a delicious helping of musical comedy.

Their high energy level spread quickly to the sellout crowd Friday night, which responded enthusiastically to every scene. The play opened Thursday and ran through Saturday.

The actors' expressive voices were punctuated by choreography that integrated a lot of slapstick and other physical comedy. They were unhindered by

Emma Williams
Theatre

the relatively small stage at Old Playmakers' Theater.

Strong vocal performances were accompanied by a five-piece band well-suited for the Motown-inspired score.

"Little Shop of Horrors" is unlike any other musical comedy. This is largely due to its unexpected characters.

Garner resident Brian Norris' portrayal of Seymour, the flower shop

worker turned mad scientist, was well-rounded. Bumbling yet lovable, Seymour was sympathetic throughout. His evil deeds seemed excusable because he was dazed by his new fame.

Ditzy shop assistant Audrey, played by senior Karen Rives, was cartoonish in mannerism but seemed to have a sincere heart. In "Somewhere That's Green," Rives expressed Audrey's goofiness without overacting.

Sophomore Isaac Rockoff was humorous as the dead-panned the grumpy, sarcastic flower shop owner Mushnik.

Senior Scott Gold switched characters at least four times without missing a beat. At one point he went from being a sadomasochistic dentist to an elderly woman in the space of a few minutes.

Duke senior Ian Klein's evil and manipulative voice was behind the carnivorous plant Audrey II. It was interesting that after starting to speak Audrey

II changed from seeming innocent to being threatening.

Chiffon, Crystal and Ronnette were three streetwise girls who narrated the play by singing and dancing in the style of The Supremes. Played by sophomore Janine Loebs, senior Charlanda Clay and junior Daphne Bazemore respectively, their doo-wopping leant a cohesiveness to the improbable plot.

The performances and music stole the show. Except for the constantly growing Audrey II, the production underemphasized set and props.

Pauper Players' "Little Shop" avoided the sappy, typically Hollywood ending included in the movie that starred Rick Moranis and Steve Martin.

Instead, they stuck to the original ending in which only Audrey II lives happily ever after. It heralds a grim future for Audrey and Seymour's America, if not for their entire world.

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Campus Calendar

MONDAY
4 p.m. Superlative Strategies for Sophomore Success will present "Health Careers for Minority Students" with Lorraine Alston in 208 Union.
Study Abroad Office will have an information session for a summer program in Paris in 12 Calwell.
5 p.m. SEAC Wildlife will meet at the Campus Y.
7 p.m. Tar Heel Recycling Program will meet in 517 Hamilton.
Leadership Matters will present a workshop titled "Cross-Cultural Leadership: An Essential Understanding" with Sibby Anderson-Thompkins in 101 Greenlaw. Information: 966-4041.
Writing Center will hold a grant writing workshop in 304 Hamilton.
8 p.m. New Generation Campus Ministries will present "Black Genocide: The Annihilation of a Race" in 226 Union.
CUAB will present a debate titled "Justice for Rodney King" between former Attorney General Edwin Meese and ACLU President Nadine Strossen in Memorial Hall.

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