

# Viewpoints

## Racism

*Understanding is key to stopping ignorance*

April 29, 1992. Los Angeles is devastated by the worst riots in U.S. history.

Media coverage following the riots stressed the need for racial equality and urban renewal. Candidates visited to get good photo opportunities, and made impassioned speeches about similar needs.

Yet as the weeks passed, media coverage dwindled, and political rhetoric slowed to a point that for most white people the issue seemed solved. Yet, to millions of African-Americans, the issue was far from resolved.

Six months have passed since the L.A. riots, and once again the issue of race relations has stepped forward, but this time on our own campus.

On Monday, USC had a forum on race relations. There were nearly 1,000 people there. Of those, about 900 were African American, 50 or so were white and the rest were of other races.

One black student said it perfectly. "How are we supposed to solve any problems when we are the only one's willing to change?" He's right. It takes at least two people to have an argument, and it takes at least two people to solve an argument.

How can any one group be expected to solve a problem without support from the others? The answer is they can't.

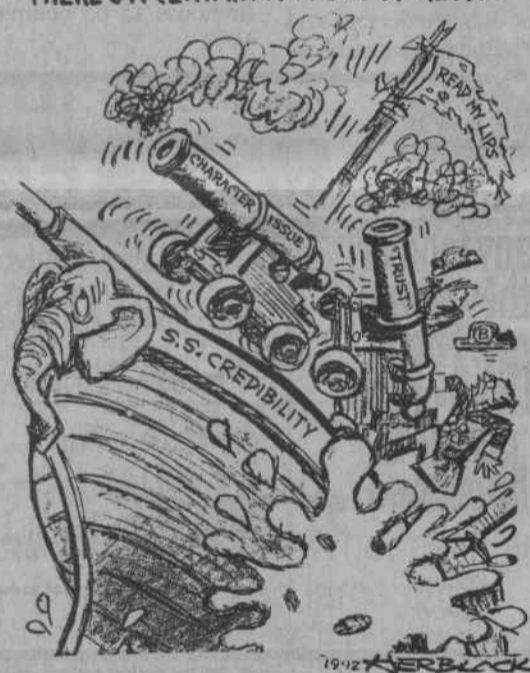
If racial tension at USC, or in the United States, is going to be eased, all groups need to be willing to change. The first steps have already been attempted but without much success. There needs to be more white people at these forums in order for them to serve their purpose.

White apathy will not solve anything. Instead, whites need to understand the richness and important contributions that have been and will be made by the African-American community.

Perhaps the time has come for all students to take a course in multiculturalism so we may better understand each other. The race forum should serve as a wake-up call to USC. Relations will not be fixed overnight. It is a wound that is deep in the American heart.

To understand each other, we must set aside all preconceived stereotypes, fear, and apathy. Only through open, honest discussion can our problems be solved.

"THERE'S A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF RECOIL"



## Political insults diminish campaign issues

I once read an interesting story about British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. He was attending a party and had a little too much to drink. While this was not an unusual thing for him to do, it did offend some other guests at the party. One woman was so upset by Churchill's behavior she decided to say something to him about it.

"You are drunk," she told him icily. "And you madam are ugly," Churchill replied. "However, I shall be sober in the morning."

Now that showed true wit. I can picture Churchill standing there in a drunken stupor and delivering this wonderfully clever insult. He was already doing then what today's politicians have come to do so well. He was attacking his critics on a personal level.

But there are some very important differences between politicians of the past, such as Churchill, and politicians of the present. Today much more attention and planning is given to the art of casting aspersions at one's political enemy.

The most recent examples of political mudslinging have been the accusations made by Ross Perot saying Republicans tried to disrupt his daughter's wedding and alter a photograph of her. Perot has offered no evidence to support these accusations, but they have still dominated

MARC LAFONTAIN  
COLUMNIST



newspaper headlines for several days.

The presidential and vice presidential debates were also perfect examples of political insults. Sen. Al Gore opened the vice presidential debate by saying to Vice President Dan Quayle, "Dan, if you don't compare yourself to Harry Truman, I won't compare you to Jack Kennedy."

This comment was in reference to another attack made on Quayle by Sen. Lloyd Bentsen in a similar debate in 1988. Bentsen mocked a comparison of Quayle to the former president saying "You sir are no Jack Kennedy." Truman was mentioned because the Bush campaign has attempted to compare Bush to Truman.

By insulting Quayle in his opening remarks, Gore set a tone for the debate which could only be described as ugly. The ensuing 90 minutes were filled with pokes and jabs between the candidates. Most were scripted and brutal. The main thing these attacks accomplished was to obscure the issues.

Viewers were far too busy watching the feud between Quayle and Gore to truly have an opportunity to hear about the real issues of the race. Many realized they had been cheated out of a meaningful debate.

Soon after, at a presidential debate, an audience member asked the candidates to stop bickering and concentrate on the issues Americans care about. Of course they said they would do so, and predictably they never did. The fighting has continued to eclipse the issues. Or perhaps hide is a better word.

The candidates have allowed the issues to be hidden behind their mudslinging. Maybe this is intentional. Perhaps they do not want the substance of their policies to come under closer scrutiny.

This is where Churchill and today's politicians part company. Leaders of the past did not let personal attacks rule their campaigns to the extent they have in recent years. Past leaders were not angels, but leaders such as Churchill were not as eager to duck the issues in favor of insults.

It is time for politicians to change. More attention needs to be given to the issues which are important to the voters. Today our leaders have allowed themselves to become drunk on insults and innuendo. Let us hope they shall be sober in the morning.

## Candidate announces key cabinet positions

Since my election to the "silly pulpit" is virtually guaranteed, I have decided to announce my choices for the key positions in the Holman-Thorsen administration.

Together, my cabinet and I will work for real change and put an end to the "gridlock in Washington." By placing competent people in these high profile positions, I hope that they will use their power to end America's second Great Depression.

Here are some of my choices for Secretary of...

■ Education: Dan Quayle. He is perfect for it. He has agreed to take the position so long as he gets for that little spelling problem he has. He is proof-positive that a mind really is a terrible thing to waste.

■ Agriculture: Mr. Greenjeans from Captain Kangaroo. Why do they call him Greenjeans? Didn't he wear blue overalls?

■ Housing and Urban Development: Mr. Fred Rogers. Our cities are decaying: socially, economically and morally. Mr. Rogers' neighbors were always glad to see him, and he always had lots of money to buy those cool sweaters and penny-loafers. So, Fred, won't you be my neighbor?

■ Energy: Homer Simpson. I have decided to give Homer a nice desk job to protect us from the China Syndrome since he nearly caused a nuclear meltdown in Springfield.

■ Defense: Texas Governor Ann Richards. If



we could arm our country with weapons as deadly as Mrs. Richards' tongue, we could lick anyone in the world!

■ Justice: Hillary Clinton. Since Mrs. Clinton has proven her "chilling" demeanor to the press, I feel her talents would be wasted by "staying at home and baking cookies." With an intelligent woman as attorney general, maybe our corporations will be found guilty for murdering our economy. Now that would be justice.

■ Health and Human Services: Dr. Jack Kevorkian. Since I will do my best to control our rapid population growth, I think his "suicide machine" just might come in handy.

For the more powerful federal positions...

■ Press Secretary: Rush Limbaugh. I can guarantee I will make a mistake that will turn the people against me. That is why I will let Rush deal with the press. Since the press hates Rush more than me, I should start getting more favorable press. That's the way things ought to be!

■ Food and Drug Administration: Anita Hill. She will ensure you will never find one of those nasty hairs floating in your Coke again.

■ Director of NASA: Jerry Brown. Since it is pretty clear that Gov. Moonbeam is living on another planet, I will help reunite him with his fellow space travelers.

■ Drug czar: Marion Berry. As head of a government program to attack the supply-side of the drug problem, Berry could single-handedly (or nostrilly) stop the Medellin cartel.

■ First Lady: Behind every good man is a truly magnificent woman. My choice for first lady has been difficult, but I have decided to grant that to the "azure-eyed" muse who helped keep the campaign torches burning.

The Cabinet, that elusive country club of power where only few members join and even fewer accomplish anything, filled with unqualified cronies who helped get their candidate elected, has become yet another useless bureau.

Instead of using their powers to accomplish anything good, they act like court jesters preening over the president and stroking his ego. They try to find projects that will make the president look good, so his re-election will be easier.

We need to make sure the person elected will not give us an unqualified Cabinet. On Nov. 4, write the White House, and tell whoever wins the election that we are not going to take it anymore.

We need a government that cares more about the people and less about winning re-election.

## Letters to the Editor

### Female impersonator thanks CPU and students of USC

**To the editor:**  
This letter is simply a "thank you" to the student body here at USC. On October 20, over 200 students came to "Mistresses of Illusion" to show their support for PALSS here in South Carolina.

Although we got started a little late, the audience showed wonderful enthusiasm and really seemed to enjoy themselves.

Even though you all could not be backstage

with us, we all knew we were a hit. We could feel the support and drew from that to better our performances. Everyone, especially Rose Michaels, kept saying, "I'm having a blast!"

As a female impersonator, it is wonderful to see CPU take a chance with such a controversial subject. I would like to see more diverse programming here at USC. People are more open-minded these days, and the more they know, the more they understand.

If you enjoyed the show, and you want to see all of us back here, let CPU know. All the performers — Danielle, Amanda, Rose, Pauline, Petite, Stephanie and I — all agreed to do it once again if the students wanted to see another show.

Thank you once again for your support.

Crystal Obsession  
USC student

### Billiot ignores white behavior

**To the editor:**  
Keith Billiot wrote an interesting letter to the editor in The Gamecock's Oct. 26 edition. It is no secret that racism exists today. Odds are you will see it when blacks attempt a peaceful demonstration against a particular injustice, and large groups of whites do every violent thing in hate's name to disrupt and intimidate.

During the weekends in my residence hall, odds are white guys will see who can hold the most liquor and expel the most vomit all over the bathrooms without respecting the other residents' desire for a clean bathroom and dollars paid to stay there.

Mr. Billiot, you mention violence in your letter, but I must remind you of the sorry cops in the L.A. incident and those in blue who continually get acquitted or insulting sentences when they kill or batter a black or minority person.

Those kids at the fair and many blacks do not have any reason to respect you or your presence simply because you have never shown respect.

Mr. Billiot, you characterize black Americans in a negative manner because that is the only way you wish to see us when some of us react to the situations brought about by your ignorance, violence and obnoxiousness.

The reality is you have to take a good look at your own evils and

face up to them instead of continually assaulting us.

Timothy V. Walters  
Music sophomore

**To the editor:**

Mr. Billiot, if you are wondering why prejudice still exists, it is because of ignorant, crass, dumb-founded views of people such as yourself.

Odds are if you go anywhere today you are going to find ill-mannered, "foul-mouthed jerks" whether black or white. But to state an entire race can be characterized as "ignorant, violent and obnoxious" is totally ludicrous!

Mr. Billiot, you are correct. There is serious discontent between whites and blacks in this country, but the only way this discontent will change is when people like you get off their high horse and stop name-calling and criticizing.

As for the black youths that you may have encountered at the fair, they probably have not received the same opportunities or education that you have as a young white male or even myself as a young middle-class black woman. This does not justify being rude to other people, but it can give you a better understanding of why youths are frustrated with a system in which they have no voice. This is probably the only way they know how to react.

Tiffany Smith  
Criminal Justice junior

### Editor blatant Republican

**To the editor:**

The arguments of Greg Rickabaugh are unsupported at best and silly at worst (Oct. 20 issue of The Gamecock). His defense of George Bush and attack on Bill Clinton are the incoherent ramblings of an uninformed editor who must look back with pleasure and nostalgia on the simple days of 1988 when Lee Atwater and Bush turned Willie Horton and the Republican presidential campaign into a national disgrace. Rickabaugh is all about mudslinging and insignificant personal attacks, rather appropriate in his supporting Bush and Dan Quayle.

By the editor's own admission, the only debate Bush came close to "winning" was saying mudslinging was not subject to the disinterest and disgust of the American people.

Just when I thought I could not be more terrified of the idea of "President Quayle," I saw his 90-minute temper tantrum in the vice presidential debate. Quayle, seldom daring to confront Al Gore on a one-on-one basis concerning relevant issues, relied on the tired old Republican cliché of unfounded character accusations against Bill Clinton. Quayle accused Clinton of being unable to come down on one side, yet when simply asked if he supported the right of a woman to choose whether to have an abor-

tion, Quayle was unable to say "yes" or "no."

Indeed, change for change's sake is not enough, but change for America's sake is. We cannot endure four more years of Bush and Quayle and trickle-down economics. The decision to elect Clinton and Gore will be the most important choice we make for our education, our health, our environment, our economy and our nation.

Such a positive change would be very prudent now at this juncture.

Bradley Bannon  
English major

**Editor's Note —**  
The Gamecock has received numerous letters in the past few days. The Viewpoints section will run an extended "Letters to the Editor" in Friday's edition. We will attempt to print as many letters as possible.

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