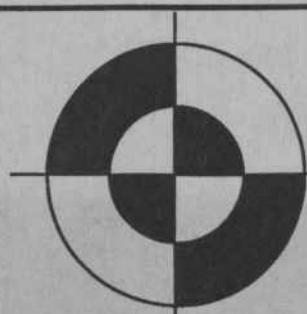


# Viewpoint



## CROSSFIRE

Are SGA forums an effective way to increase student involvement on campus?

**PRO ZACHARY MOORE**

**CON LEA CLAYTON**

USC has been plagued by student apathy problems for some time now. To some potential student activists, "forum" means failure.

Many students on campus wonder what to think of languid SGA town meetings that fail to attract the attention of students who are out of the "student government loop."

What are students to think of the SGA forum on race relations that left the campus staring at racial misunderstanding without proposing legitimate solutions for change? One might ask if SGA forums do anything at all.

I share students' disdain for panel discussions, conferences and forums that seem like all talk and no action, but forum meetings are the first and necessary step towards any kind of activism.

Look at Congress; before they decide to do anything on paper, a plethora of committees and study groups talk and hash out the issues, while also prioritizing them.

This spring, the Race is the Issue forum proved that students and members of the community can become heartily involved in debating an issue, even proposing solutions. In fact, this forum, by exposing disparate opinions on racial issues, stirred students' concerns of racial discrimination and understanding on this campus. As a result, many SGA candidates placed the issue of diversity and racial understanding squarely on their agendas for reform.

SGA forums put students' needs on the SGA agenda and open a much-needed line of communication to pockets of students with varied interests.

But enough harping. I am very optimistic that the new SGA leadership can provide the initiative to communicate with students at public meetings. Tuesday's Vice President's Panel is a clear indication SGA wants to help students understand the university-wide changes that impact nearly every student at USC: academic integrity, visitation and sexual orientation policies.

The panel drew a respectable amount of students and allowed them to talk with Jerry Crotty of Student Development, Dennis Pruitt of Student Affairs and members of SGA. This is a valuable link between the students, student organizations, SGA and the administration.

Student government plans to periodically convene similar student forums to communicate with student organizations. I am optimistic student groups can work together through forums for common change and, in effect, save money in a time of budget cuts and ease the burden of being a student activist.

In this way, SGA can help student leaders make very real changes in the Carolina community. Ultimately, we should stop complaining about SGA forums and use them to activate USC's potential.

*Zachary Moore is SGA's Director of Organizational Affairs*

I am of the opinion that SGA forums are not an effective way to increase student involvement on campus. Moreover, I would be willing to bet the majority of the campus would agree with me if it even knew about the panel discussions in the first place.

For the most part, many students view their elected officials as power-hungry and uncaring about the students' needs. The government appears ineffectual, and students feel alienated by "the system."

The prospect of attending a forum does not alleviate the anger a student feels at not being able to find a parking space or being treated like a child by an overly restrictive visitation policy.

The forums provide nothing but talking, which is all SGA seems to do. If the ideas of the participants were actually taken seriously and implemented, students would have more faith in SGA and its forums.

At this time, what can another panel discussion accomplish anyway? It seems as if SGA is only jumping on the "town meeting" bandwagon, used effectively by President Clinton in last year's campaign. But that was the point — to get elected, not to voice the people's ideas after election.

Our student leaders should realize this fact and quit trying to draw in the apathetic hoards of students who attend USC.

Even though students outside SGA are not interested in student government, that does not mean they do not care about what happens to them. SGA should realize this, too.

Students have lost faith in the ability of student government and its mechanisms, such as the forums, to represent them and implement measures that benefit them.

Perhaps solutions can be created in these forums, but students know the elected officials lack the power to enforce any of these ideas.

The only forums students have heard of are the race forums. Instead of making progress, however, these forums divided the campus on the issue of race. Many feelings were hurt, and nothing was accomplished.

The student government needs the respect of its constituents. That is where its power lies. The officials really cannot fight "the system" unless it has the voice and will of the people behind it.

And sponsoring poorly publicized forums, which cause more problems than they solve, is not the way to encourage involvement.

I believe these forums cannot rally the students' support. SGA needs to prove itself as an effective and sincere organization by taking more than symbolic action on the issues under which it was elected, such as safety, parking, recycling and budget cuts.

These are the issues about which students care. But SGA has proven that coordinating a successful forum is inherently problematic.

There are students who want to address these issues, but forums are not the most effective way to encourage student action.

*Lea Clayton is an assistant news editor of The Gamecock*

## Thurmond

Death of senator's daughter reminder of drinking and driving consequences

The tragic death of 22-year-old Nancy Thurmond, a USC student and Sen. Strom Thurmond's daughter, sent the state of South Carolina into mourning earlier this week.

According to police, the woman, whose car struck Thurmond, was driving under the influence of alcohol. She was charged with felony driving under the influence and faces up to 25 years in prison and a \$15,000 fine.

The crime of drunk driving and its sometimes tragic results have been the target of one of the most extensive public service campaigns of all time. Ever since we were small, we have been inundated with anti-drunk driving commercials; so by the time we are allowed to drive at age 16, we have been completely socialized to despise this act. And justifiably.

However, none of the implications of such a crime hit home until somebody we know or somebody famous is a DUI victim.

There are many victims of drunk drivers who end up either dead or paralyzed. But they usually remain faceless to the general public.

The death of Thurmond, however, is one that hits most of us in one way or another. She was a fellow student, young, preparing to graduate, with an entire life ahead of her.

She was also walking around Five Points, the most popular off-campus spot for USC students to fraternize. Most of us probably had a close call with a car there.

But there is one big difference between her and most of the students at USC: her father is Strom Thurmond, a virtual political institution in the state.

Because of this, her death reaches the front pages of The State and makes every television newscast in the nation. And there is nothing wrong with that.

But if Joe Student were hit by a car on Greene Street, it might be covered in The State's metro section and on WIS, but that would be it. Other than The Gamecock, the student's death would get second-rate coverage at best.

But then that's the nature of celebrity families anywhere.

This also brings up another question: Will the woman who hit Thurmond get a fair trial? The nature of Thurmond's death just because she is the senator's daughter could be problematic in finding an impartial jury or judge. The case might be open and shut, but then again, it might not. The woman has only been charged with being under the influence; she has not been convicted.

The death of Nancy Thurmond is truly a terrible thing, and our hearts go out to her family and friends. But it's also a shame it takes the death of a famous student to bring the tragedies of drinking and driving crashing home to its full realization.

### LETTERS POLICY

The Gamecock will try to print all letters received. Letters should be 200-250 words maximum. Full name and professional title or year and major, if a student, must be included along with an address and phone number. The Gamecock reserves the right to edit for style, possible libel or space limitations. The Gamecock will not withhold names under any circumstances.

## Rap does not compare to Anderson's spirituals

The most powerful and most beautiful voice of the civil rights movement took its last breath last Thursday.

Marian Anderson didn't lead a March on Washington or establish a political organization, yet she had a huge impact on how a largely white society viewed African-Americans in high cultural society.

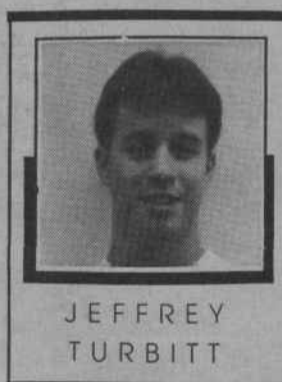
Marian Anderson sang, and she did it well. Legendary conductor Arturo Toscanini is reputed to have said to Anderson, "A voice like yours is heard only once in a hundred years."

Marian Anderson was the first African-American woman to sing at the Metropolitan Opera. One might call her the Jackie Robinson of the opera world, for she broke the color barrier at the Met in 1955 — one year before Robinson would do so in the major leagues. (check date)

While Anderson sang convincing renderings of the Lieder of Bach, Brahms and Schubert, she was one of the first and best singers of spirituals. These spirituals, of African essence and once sung by Americans slaves, had intense emotional impact on white audiences who were largely unfamiliar with this music. At the same time, Anderson helped spread an American form of Lieder, which our country could then hold up to European music and boast of its comparatively profound artistic statement.

Anderson's death also serves as a reminder of the myriad contributions African-Americans have made to American music. Jazz, rock and blues are just some of the areas of influence. In fact, there are no forms of American music to which African-Americans haven't contributed heavily.

It is unfortunate to music in general, however, that the latest African-American contribution to the music world is rap, or hip-hop. While rap is definitely



JEFFREY TURBITT

a form of expression, it is hardly music, or musical. Is there tone color? Melody? Are there even any notes? Try humming a rap song.

Marian Anderson gave her last concert in 1965, and people still study her work. One can find her records from the '30s still in print. But can anyone remember a rap song from four years ago? Will we really care what the likes of Queen Latifah are doing in two years?

The reason for this is that the "music" is repetitive and simplistic. Surely a form of music can't be taken seriously, or remembered, when its basis is videos of the performers in outrageous costumes. Do these performers wear their clothes backward, wear a clock around their neck or wear a boxing glove on their head to lend credence to their work?

Marian Anderson didn't have to call herself Contralto M.A. to sell records; she sold records because she had talent. These showy tactics rap artists use are a diversion to how trite most of this music really is.

Marian Anderson once said that part of the reason she sang spirituals was because it was the music of her people. I doubt Chuck D could find many native Africans saying the same thing about any of his group's music.

*Jeffrey Turbitt is a columnist for The Gamecock*

## Feminism requires unity between races

To the editor:

I am responding to Rochelle Killingbeck's editorial of April 7 which questions whether the feminist movement addresses the needs of black women.

The feminist movement is for all women of every color, nationality and economic status. It is also for men who believe that women deserve equal rights.

One look at Ms. magazine, which has long chronicled the movement in the United States, should convince Ms. Killingbeck that feminism is empowered by people of all races. Of course, poverty, rape, health care, sexual harassment and discrimination are issues which affect everyone.

Furthermore, feminists have long sought adequate day care for all women — those searching for work and dependent on government aid as well as those already employed.

Any social movement requires action and participation. Women who feel feminism does not address their needs should speak

out and specify those needs. They should attend meetings and read feminist literature. Try Alice Walker, Simon de Beauvoir, Gloria Steinem and Zora Neale Hurston. Let other women know about the difficulties in their lives.

Feminism, in order to be successful, also requires cohesiveness. White women cannot exclude black women. Black women cannot resent the fact that white women are involved. Any feminist worth her salt knows this very well. Inclusiveness is at the core of the feminist philosophy.

Women have a long way to go to achieve equal rights — even here in the United States. The only way to make progress is for all people who seek respect to band together.

*Laura P. Valtorta  
Attorney at Law  
USC alumna*

## Student shares story of Interlibrary Loan

To the editor:

For those who do not understand why graduate students start pulling

their hair out and contemplate jumping off the Gervais Street Bridge, allow me to relate a fairly typical encounter with the USC establishment.

Last January, in researching my thesis, I sought a journal article in the Thomas Cooper Library. The journal is kept and cataloged by the library, but like tens of thousands of books and journals in that enormous underground cavern, the volume I needed was stolen, lost, hidden, dematerialized or otherwise unaccounted for.

I asked Interlibrary Loan to order the article. They told me that would not be possible because Thomas Cooper has the article. I explained gently that 'Ole Tom might have it, but he can't produce it or account for it. They repeated that Cooper can't order journal articles it already keeps. I responded that it doesn't keep them; it loses them (Ever read "Catch 22"?).

The library people told me to be patient — the article would appear. I was patient for three weeks, at which time Thomas Cooper had still not produced the missing journal with its needed article. At the

time, the library agreed to order it through Interlibrary Loan. That was in February.

I waited... and waited... and waited. The familiar Interlibrary Loan green card did not appear in my mailbox.

Finally, on Wednesday, April 7, an Interlibrary Loan staffer, after consulting her computer, shamefacedly told me there had apparently been an oversight. The article had arrived on March 4, but no card was mailed to notify me.

I was too joyful to be angry. Very well, I said, just give me the article. The woman went to the shelf. She looked... and looked... Alas, the long-sought article was stolen, lost, hidden, dematerialized or otherwise unaccounted for.

I wish I could report that she collapsed at my feet in shame and contrition, but in fact she just shrugged it off, as if to say, "That's the way things are around here."

As for myself, my hair is getting thinner and the Gervais Street Bridge is looking better every day.

*Will Moredock  
Graduate student*

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