

VIEWPOINTS



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Veterans

Americans should reflect on soldiers who have served, remember what holiday represents

On Thursday, Americans will celebrate Veteran's Day with the usual fanfare of department stores and three-day weekends. And as with other national holidays, many Americans will spend the day unencumbered by any real concept of what it is they are celebrating, only grateful for the chance to sleep late and then shop 'til they drop.

Veteran's Day has been set aside so that we may express our appreciation for those men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces who, for as long as America has been a country, have defended the country's ideals at home and across the globe. Through their efforts alone, we are able to continue to espouse the democratic notions and personal liberties we so often take for granted.

This year's Veteran's Day, though, represents something even more.

Thursday will mark the 75th anniversary of the Armistice signed by the Allies and Germans that put a halt to the wholesale slaughter that characterized World War I. It was at 11 a.m. Nov. 11, 1918, when the conflict optimistically called "The War to End All Wars," which claimed more than 12 million lives during four years, came to an end in a railroad car in what is now known as Armistice Clearing, France.

In fact, Veteran's Day was originally called Armistice Day, called into being to commemorate the American men and women who had served in World War I. On June 1, 1954, Kansas Representative Edwin Rees introduced a measure to change the name to Veteran's Day so that it might honor not only the brave souls who served during the First World War but all those who have given of themselves in the U.S. Armed Forces so that we may continue to count freedom among our most valued possessions.

Of course, we will be targeted with a deluge of sales, markdowns and promotional events Thursday, and much of the country will enjoy an extra day away from the office.

But lest we forget, the people who have served have not done so simply that we may take advantage of an extra day's vacation by spending it at the local mall. Let us make certain the efforts and the sacrifices of those men and women, whether living or dead, do not go forgotten.

Condemning homosexuality invalid, misguided credo

As college students learning what is necessary to survive in the world of adults, we are most often the ones in the trenches fighting to establish our society's values. By our behavior, we set the agenda of that conflict, and where we depart from proscribed actions, we hoist the banner and form for battle.

Few campaigns have been more fierce, more appallingly savage than the fray around homosexuality. It has cost friendships, careers, faith and lives. The din of the battle still continues, perhaps distantly for now, but it will return with inevitable fury. Yet, it need not be so.

The individual struggle of coming to terms with homosexuality is a searing experience itself without the often sanctimonious bombast of people who think of gays as some sort of abomination. The Judeo-Christian mores of our society cloud the picture of what forms of sexuality are "proper" and add a herculean weight of guilt over the shoulders of every gay person.

In turning a close eye to the fine print of our Bibles, our Torahs and our Korans, many of us seem to find a holy sanction against the "deviant" behavior of gays. But this is surely not how the Almighty asks us to treat each other. In describing homosexuals as deviant or as an abomination, those who claim righteousness are in fact denying the very humanity, with all its frailty, beauty, confusion and courage, to a whole class of people.

Slavery was once the lot of black men and women as ordained by God, who has changed over the years, as his custom it would seem, so that his teachings justify the behavior and attitudes of a select group. The rest be damned; perhaps, foremost among them gays.

Gay people do not occupy some lesser station as human

beings any more than the handicapped or racial groups stigmatized by generations of ignorance and insecurity. Indeed, like many oppressed groups, the gay community counts among its members some of the most luminous, courageous human beings alive. In many cases and in many places today, it takes as much courage and bravery to say aloud "I am gay" as it took as little as 30 years ago to say "I am black, and I am proud."

To say God condemns a man or a woman for being gay: That is the abomination. It is a bastard faith that forgets the supremacy of compassion and understanding.

Love is a precious, fleeting thing. Its coming is mysterious; its passing topples empires. It is the one foundation, the one promise of eternity that makes our lives worth living. Let no one deny it to another.

To any gay person who reads this column and struggles in the face of adversity, animosity and doubt, have faith. The whole world is not arrayed against you.

To those who would condemn me for what I write, know that I was damned by your standards long before this column appeared. I ask you to think on what I have written and not be so quick to damn. Learn from the god who guides your faith, whatever it may be. Let compassion and understanding stay the hand of judgment.

Jay King is city editor of *The Gamecock*. His column appears every other Wednesday.



Jay King

USC VOICES

How do you feel about Veteran's Day?



"Those who fought for Vietnam were not recognized when they came back from the war, so this national holiday makes up for what the government didn't do. It also honors veterans of other wars."

LaTonya Hazel
Accounting freshman



"It's an important day. We should be grateful to those who risked their lives. One can realize what veterans did not only for country but for families."

Ashley Clayton
Psychology sophomore



"Veteran's Day gives us something to think about in case other wars or conflicts arise. I remember Vietnam veterans because my dad was in the war."

Shelton Sanders
Marketing freshman



"Veterans should receive more celebrations and benefits."

Colin Whitley
Biology sophomore

Master Minds—

Indifference, fear impede racial harmony

When President Clinton appeared at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill in October to celebrate the 200th anniversary of that institution's founding, he urged the faculty, students and staff members to devote themselves to "lifelong learning."

Clinton linked this philosophy of thirst for knowledge to security, saying a readiness to adapt to changing times is essential to success, both individual and national prosperity.

I propose that our nation's willingness to adapt and to learn extends to our interpersonal relationships as well. Of principal concern to me are race relations.

Before joining the USC faculty and since, I wrote about my deep and abiding concern for the future of our nation, fearing that indifference, or frustration, would prevail over the efforts of many to stimulate dialogue, understanding and respect among people of all colors. In short, to search for solutions to race problems.

I've urged readers and students not to shy away from frank discussions about their differences but embrace opportunities to learn about those unlike them so that we might better adapt and all might prosper.

Of late, I've not been encouraged by responses I've received.

Distrust, fed by ignorance of the other, has its



Ernest Wiggins

jaws locked on many of us, black, white and brown, making productive change difficult.

Though I carry the skepticism of many in the journalistic profession, I have considered myself one of those most ready and willing to exchange ideas about race. Lately, however, I find myself less open, less willing to engage, wondering "what it will profit."

During a conversation with a few students last week, I shared the observation that many voice frustration and resentment when matters of race are introduced. I told them I hear in their sighs, "I'm sick of hearing about this." I told them I understood and regrettably, at times, feel the same.

They admitted feeling angry and bitter about black rage directed at whites. They accept that racism exists but reject charges that they harbor such feelings or contribute to it.

This came as no revelation. Lengthy articles in newspapers and magazines have reported

similar sentiments among students across the nation. "Doonesbury," in its signature fashion, has offered glib commentary on race relations on college campuses. To me, the underlying fear is not veiled by the reporting and rhetoric.

What is especially troubling about the mass media treatments I've read or viewed is the prevailing reluctance to search for solutions. Perhaps, these matters are too ponderous to consider.

Race relations is indeed a conundrum, as James Baldwin wrote nearly 40 years ago. But it is clear that the riddle will not be solved if we refuse to take up lifelong learning so that we might adapt and prosper.

Baldwin described his unique quest in 1955 in the introduction to "Notes of a Native Son": "...one must find...one's own moral center and move through the world hoping that this center will guide one aright."

Though Baldwin, who died six years ago this month, was writing of his own search, ours need not be solitary endeavors. We all must devote ourselves to finding that "center" to guide us out of the treacherous pit of ignorance, fear and despair.

Ernest Wiggins is an associate professor in the College of Journalism and Mass Communications.

SGA helps create safety programs for women

Omicron Delta Kappa, a nationally recognized leadership honor society, holds an annual student and faculty forum on an issue pertinent to campus life. In spring 1992, sexual assault was the selected topic, resulting in heated debate and accusations against USC for poorly handling sexual assault cases.

In reaction to the forum and the extensive media coverage, President John Palms formed a Sexual Assault Task Force to evaluate and to make recommendations to rectify the situation. Headed by Miriam Freeman, the task force submitted a proposal in summer 1992 to Palms with 18 recommendations to implement in full or in part.

The task force created the Office of Sexual Assault Programs and Services, coordinated by Eileen Korpita, which offers students a place for information, education and a protocol for response. The office includes the program Creating Attitudes for a Rape-free Environment,



Jennifer Smoak

which provides rape survivors basic support and the opportunity to ask questions about their rights.

Next week marks USC's annual Safety Days, three days dedicated to heightening awareness. Programming for Nov. 17 is dedicated to sexual assault awareness. Campus Rape Awareness will sponsor its third annual "1 in 6 Day." "1 in 6" represents the number of college women who will be raped. The intention of the program is to heighten awareness of the severity of the problem and how close to home it is for all of us.

SGA and Korpita's office will sponsor "Blow the Whistle on Rape." Keychain whistles engraved with phone numbers for campus and city police and the office will be given out. Korpita's office will also sponsor Chimera training, an intensive self-defense class for women.

Safety Days is one example of what USC does to increase safety everyday. The Safety Committee and SGA work year-round with lighting, call boxes and other precautionary and preventive measures to help avoid sexual assault. In case of a sexual assault, Korpita's office provides a valuable resource for dealing with the aftermath. It is shocking to discover that USC did not have a sexual assault policy until recently, but look how far we have come.

Jennifer Smoak is chairwoman of the Safety Committee and Committee on Sexual Assault for SGA.

RU 486 poses threat to mother's, baby's health

In a 1991 issue of the British medical journal *Lancet*, doctors describe a case when a mother took the abortifacient drug RU 486 and failed to abort her unborn child. Her baby was born with severe malformations of its internal organs and lower extremities, the worst of these being the fusion of its lower limbs into a single flexed foot with seven toes.

In France, any woman who requests chemical abortion must sign a consent form that states if she takes the drug and then decides to carry her baby to term that "I have been clearly warned the child and/or I may be susceptible to risks, notably malformation of the fetus or child."

One woman has died after taking RU 486, and two others have suffered life-threatening heart effects. Numerous reports list severe cramping, nausea, vomiting and bleeding as side effects of RU 486. The president of Roussel Uclaf, the French company which makes the drug, has himself called the RU 486 abortion process "an appalling psychological ordeal."

Pro-choice groups in the United States are eager to see RU 486 approved by the FDA or individual states so it can be tested for use as an abortifacient. However, the debate over the use of the drug goes far beyond whether abortion is right or wrong. The major issue is the medical danger RU 486 poses to mothers and babies



Marc LaFountain

who are brought to term after being exposed to it.

Contrary to popular belief, RU 486 is not a "morning-after pill." The drug, taken in conjunction with a hormone-like substance called prostaglandin, is used by a woman three weeks to nine weeks into her pregnancy. In many cases, the unborn child has a beating heart when the drug is administered.

Once taken, RU 486 renders the hormone progesterone inactive. Without progesterone, the uterus cannot support an embryo. The growing child is deprived of nutrients during a growth period when major organs and body parts such as arms and legs develop. The end result is uterine contractions that expel the embryo.

The effectiveness of RU 486, which is currently used in France and Britain, is hotly debated. Pro-life groups put it at 60 percent to 80 percent effective at inducing abortion. Pro-choice groups generally claim 90 percent to 100 per-

cent efficiency.

In cases when abortion is not achieved or when a mother decides to carry a baby to term after taking RU 486, the fetus spends months in the uterus deprived of nutrition. The use of the drug can lead to deformities for the child and problems for the mother.

One argument some make for the legalization of RU 486 in the United States is that it could help in the treatment of cancer. There are studies that show the drug could be helpful in controlling hormonally-dependent cancers. However, current FDA regulations do not prohibit cancer research using RU 486 in the United States. The FDA only prohibits the importation of the drug for personal uses such as inducing abortion. Cancer research concerning RU 486 occurs in this country and should continue.

There are numerous questions about the medical effects and efficiency of RU 486 as an abortifacient. The women and unborn children of this nation should not be used as guinea pigs to answer these questions. RU 486 should not be cleared for human testing or used to induce abortion.

Marc LaFountain is a senior writer for *The Gamecock*.