



'We cannot support the lottery because it will prey upon those who sit in our pews and live in our communities.'

Reverend Joe Darby, Seventh Episcopal Diocese of the AME Church

The Gamecock

Serving the Carolina Community since 1908

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FDA chooses wisely in RU-486 approval

It's called mifepristone. RU-486. The abortion pill. It's also been called a revolution in women's reproductive control. The FDA's approval of mifepristone this past Thursday gives U.S. women an alternative to surgical abortion, a benefit women in Europe have had since the pill's 1988 origin in France. When mifepristone hits the market in about a month, women will be able to end their pregnancies early and in their own homes.

Only two days after FDA approval of RU-486, a Catholic priest crashed his car into the Illinois Women's Center and hacked at the building with an ax. Clinic violence by abortion foes — which in recent years has included harassment, break-ins, bombings and even murder — is a primary reason mifepristone's approval is a wise decision. Though the drug will initially be available through abortion providers, family practitioners and gynecologists will eventually be able to prescribe RU-486 for about the same price as surgical abortion. This will make it harder for anti-abortion activists to target specific facilities and will further secure anonymity for women seeking abortion services.

Abortion rights is an issue colored by politics, and challenges to *Roe v. Wade* — such as partial birth abortion bans — have been struck down by only one or two votes. This year, when a presidential victory could mean as many as three Supreme Court appointments, it's good to know the FDA has brought the choice to end a pregnancy closer to what *Roe v. Wade* intended it to be: a private decision between a woman and her physician.

Give USC Olympians their hero's welcome

The University of South Carolina had 18 participants in the Summer Olympics. These athletes and coaches should be welcomed back to America and USC with open arms.

They deserve praise for representing the university and their respective countries in such an admirable manner. Being an Olympian is an accomplishment in itself, and they should be viewed as champions merely because of that title.

Many will be returning to America donning cherished international honors. Five medals went to athletes with USC ties, including top honors in baseball.

USC athletes were represented in baseball, diving, swimming and track and field events. As long as USC has Olympic representatives, that fact should tell us that we have some of the best and most highly regarded athletes to offer the world.

They gave their best efforts, competing or winning against the world's greatest athletes.

USC's Olympians have made monumental achievements and contributed to the success of their countries' representation in the summer games, and they should be treated with a great deal of respect.

ABOUT US

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Letters to the editor or guest columns are welcome from all members of the Carolina community. Letters should be 250-300 words. Guest columns should be an opinion piece of about 600 words.

Both must include name, phone number, professional title or year and major, if a student. Handwritten submissions must be personally delivered to Russell House room 333. E-mail submissions must include telephone number for confirmation and should be sent to gamecockviewpoints@hotmail.com.

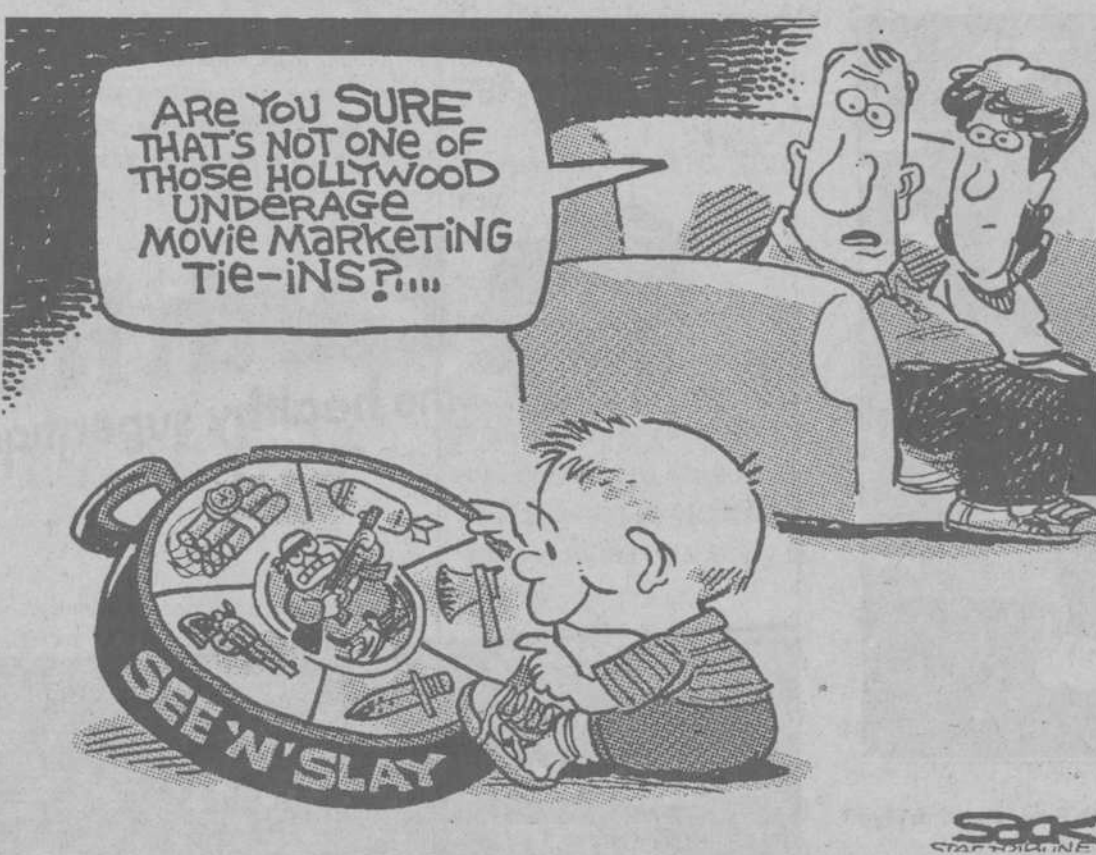
The Gamecock reserves the right to edit for libel, style and space. Anonymous letters will not be published. Photos are required for guest columnist and can be provided by the submitter.
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GREEK LIFE

Fining your way to friendship

There are certain things students just have to accept about USC, and one of these is the Greek system.



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The Greek system at USC provides this school and its individual members with a lot of benefits. But let's be honest; students don't join fraternities and sororities to make great contributions to society. They join the Greek system to have a good time and make some friends. But they claim to be more than just friends once they're finally initiated after pledging. They're supposed to be brothers and sisters. While there are undoubtedly strong friendships and bonds formed in fraternities and sororities, apparently in some sororities, members can't be trusted to become friends on their own. They're forced into it through fines and penalties.

Call me crazy, but fining your way to friendship isn't exactly, well, friendship. A lot of sororities on campus fine their members for things such as missing meetings or not participating in sorority events. Some fines can be avoided by writing an excuse, but is the whole fining system really necessary? Fraternities don't seem to think

so. But for some reason sororities do. Apparently sororities don't seem to care if someone actually has to work on the night of a meeting. They apparently think it's more important for someone to know what fraternity they're having their next mixer with instead of studying for an important exam.

This practice is absolutely ludicrous. Real friends wouldn't fine someone for forgetting to mow the lawn or to meet someone for a drink. But I guess those who are in these sororities aren't real friends, or maybe they're jealous of the actual friendships had by sororities that don't fine their members.

I wonder just how many sororities told their potential new members during recruitment that if they couldn't make a meeting, they would be financially penalized until they learned their lesson. I'm guessing none. It's not exactly something to brag about.

But neither is fining someone for not participating in the building of a homecoming float. And then there's being fined for smoking in a T-shirt with official letters on it or — as one of my sorority friends told me — even for shacking up with someone who you're not officially lavaliered to.

As bad as it is to fine one's way to friendship, it's just as bad to fine one's way to conformity. Sororities claim they don't try to strip their girls' individuality, but when you financially penalize someone for doing something that the herd doesn't agree with,

that's exactly what's being taught.

To counteract the often negative image that seems to accompany Greek life, a lot of Greek organizations perform community service. For a lot of these organizations, they do this because they sincerely want to help others and develop leadership skills. Hey, I think that's wonderful. What's not wonderful, is — surprise, surprise! — fining someone who doesn't participate. Once someone is forced to perform community service, it's no longer service, it's communism. It amazes me that students actually pay to be part of an organization that would hand out so many fines for a plethora of reasons all in the name of friendship.

Now, not all sororities at USC do this. The sororities who don't maniacally hand out fines left and right to their members should be damn proud they don't. I would hope everyone who considers going through recruitment next year takes time to ask each sorority whether they participate in fining their way to friendship, or do they have the real thing. I would also encourage every sorority who doesn't participate in fining to write a letter to the editor to make students aware of who does and who doesn't. I'm not going to personally identify those who do fine, but you know who you are. And soon enough, the rest of the university will, too. Happy recruitment next year.

LETTERS

Service fraternity continues to provide its services to USC

To the Editor,

Alpha Phi Omega (APO) has joined a cooperative effort with the University Transportation Services in order to make sure students, faculty and staff can safely get across campus.

APO is not egotistical nor ignorant enough to compete with the entity that it serves. It is here to do service to the university as is stated in its founding principles.

APO is a volunteer organization whose members offer their time, free of charge, to make sure students, faculty and staff can get across campus safely. The escort service (available 8 p.m.-midnight, Sunday-Thursday at 777-DUCK) has been serving the needs of its riders for 29 years and continues to do so.

The escort service should be used by riders who are unable to get to shuttle stops due to a disability, a dark, unsafe walk to a stop, etc. The shuttle system is simply another way to prevent students from be-

ing in danger. As a paying organization as well as a single-purpose group, the shuttle service can run longer hours and focus all of its effort on campus safety.

APO is dedicated to service to the community, the university and the nation. Therefore, it is unable to focus all of its time on the escort service. The escort service will continue to cooperate with the university for many years to come, and it will continue to fulfill a need that has not been met by any other group.

Jim Schwaller
Business Management Senior
Former President, Alpha Phi Omega

Reader takes issue with Viewpoints page

To the Editor,

I feel I must take issue with Assistant Viewpoints Editor and columnist Nathan White's latest assault on historical fact and modern life.

The Olympic Games had not deteriorated into "slaves competing for their lives against wild animals" by Nero's reign.

Nero participated in the Olympic Games during his Greek tour, 67-68. The gladiatorial games evolved in Italy independently of the Olympics out of Etruscan funerary custom.

As for the revival of that Olympic spirit which Mr. White calls for, both cheating and sponsorship were present in the ancient system. When athletes win today in the Olympics, their corporate sponsors reap the benefits and the athletes have a source of income. If you don't agree with this system, don't watch: Please don't whine.

Three individuals are listed as editors, and misspellings still occur in the most blatant of places, like the "Quote, Unquote," the meaning of which was completely lost by the lack of proofreading. How can I have pride in my school's newspaper when even its staff does not?

I find my answer in Valerie Matchette's excellent front-page article on Underground Columbia. This article was interesting, informative, and truly a joy to read. Kudos and thank you, Ms. Matchette! You have restored my faith in the media.

Brodie Lide
Classical Studies Senior

DRUG USE

Marijuana never gets anyone in a ruckus

This summer, I saw too much ugliness and misconduct at various social gatherings. I had to restrain and separate too many aggressive, furious bodies from colliding.



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I'd never been involved in any serious physical altercation before this summer, but my clean fighting record has been tarnished. The attacker thought the attack could easily be excused by the intake of hard liquor, but my sentiment toward him won't ever be the same.

All of this behavior can be blamed on drinking. Alcohol can escalate internal rage and frustration into outward physical expression. It's a depressant and a confrontationalant.

At one party, my friends and I had to drag and restrain another friend from a fight that escalated into a brawl. The party's attendants were large in number and diverse in background. Grappling ensued. Cliques clashed, blood dripped and the authorities arrived. Who knows? The violence might've resulted even if alcohol weren't present, but alcohol certainly didn't curb anyone's destructive tendencies. I think those fists of rage wouldn't have flown if not for drink.

I also attended my share of parties where marijuana was present. There was no fighting, no violence, no destruction. I'm certain the users didn't awaken the next morning lamenting their decision to ingest the drug because of the behavior it might've induced. I've heard countless stories about regrets that generally accompany getting drunk, but I've heard few stories about stoned misbehavior.

I know many pot enthusiasts and I'm happy I've gotten to know them. I've never felt threatened by them. Some have told me they feel like they're better people for having smoked the amount they did. I know hyperactive people who swear they would've been jailed if not for pot. It doesn't hurt anyone's appetite either. It has generated many bursts of creativity and laughter, which might not have materialized otherwise, though one can make the same case for alcohol.

Bill Maher said something about how smoking pot certainly doesn't hurt your taste in music. Although I'm not the strongest advocate of the drug, I'm also no stranger to it, and my music collection has become more eclectic because of marijuana.

But I've also heard statistics on the potency of modern marijuana. If marijuana is 50 percent more potent than it was during the Vietnam era, then this explains a lot. The vast majority of my music and film collection is comprised of entertainment from the mild-pot era. It seems that the proportion of entertainment with creativity, relevance and resonance was much higher then. While the proportion might also be attributed to the issues that were present, I doubt this is the only contributing factor.

I consider myself a weekend drinker, and if drinking ever made me act with malice, then I would stop drinking. Some drinkers tend to drink for the wrong reasons, just as stoners tend to smoke for the wrong reasons.

But I have yet to meet a pot smoker who gets stoned to fight or outwardly express frustration or discontent. In moderation, both drugs are generally acceptable, but in my experiences, drinking has a more detrimental effect.

Doctors have told me that a night of drinking yields far more physical harm than does a night of getting high. I would argue it's more psychologically damaging as well. If gregariousness is the intended effect of drinking, then pugacity shouldn't be sought after.

This rhetoric might not prove anything about these drugs. I'm not suggesting that everyone must get stoned, but I'm also not suggesting that everyone should get drunk. Intake of these drugs should depend on the individual and one's intent.

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