



The Gamecock

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University needs area for free expression

When Student Government took on the task of painting the pedestrian tunnel that connects the School of Law and the Coliseum, some students wrote letters to *The Gamecock* calling for the tunnel to be an area of free expression.

While university-themed paintings have been a welcome replacement to the worms that once adorned the tunnel's walls, we think USC still needs an area where members of the campus community can express themselves artistically.

A university, by definition, supports the liberal exchange of knowledge and ideas. If USC were to allow a free-expression area, a student could grab a can of spray paint, head to that area and write or paint whatever he wanted. What could be more liberating than that?

This concept is not completely new. Such a spot exists on the campus of North Carolina State University, and it's quite popular among students. The college actually includes the site on its tour for prospective students.

The best part of this idea is that anyone — from drunken partygoers to tenured professors — could use the area as a forum to express both opinions and creative impulses. The Assembly Street tunnel is just one of many areas administrators might consider for such a purpose.

Soccer team needs our support this weekend

This weekend, one of the most important games of the year in USC athletics will take place, and it's not in Kentucky. The men's soccer team, ranked No. 4 nationally, will take on arch-rival Clemson, ranked No. 20, at The Graveyard on Sunday afternoon.

The men's soccer team has consistently been one of the best in the country, and this weekend every Gamecock fan will be able to watch them play at their best.

Every game the soccer team plays is intense, but the Clemson game eclipses all of them. The group from the hills has beaten the Gamecocks in every game they've played the past five years, including once in the NCAA tournament. But USC is in the position to end this streak and perhaps vault into a No. 1 ranking.

USC has demonstrated time and time again that it has the best fans in the country, and this weekend we have another opportunity to prove it. Every Gamecock fan should make it a point to go to the soccer game Sunday and create a loud, intimidating atmosphere while cheering the Gamecocks on to victory. The soccer team has done its job by providing students a team we can be proud of, and now it's our turn to provide the soccer team a strong student fan base that will strike fear into every opponent who dare step on our field. Admission to the game is free for students — what more reason do you need?

ABOUT US

The Gamecock is the student newspaper of The University of South Carolina and is published Monday, Wednesday and Friday during the fall and spring semesters and nine times during the summer with the exception of university holidays and exam periods. Opinions expressed in *The Gamecock* are those of the editors or author and not those of The University of South Carolina. The Board of Student Publications and Communications is the publisher of *The Gamecock*. The Department of Student Media is the newspaper's parent organization. *The Gamecock* is supported in part by student activities fees.

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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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DEBATES 2000



GREEN SPACE

Cities don't need grassy fields

One thought continuously ran through my head yesterday afternoon as I drove back and forth past the Russell House and the lush green space now beside it: Columbia is a city.



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Furthermore, cities are not supposed to have green spaces. Cities are not supposed to have grass. Cities are not supposed to have trees. Cities have pavement. They have sidewalks. They have tall buildings and vacant lots. Most importantly, cities have places to park your car.

I understand that many people feel green space is more pleasing to the eye than rows of parked cars. I also realize that a great many people like to sit in the grass or under a tree scribbling existential poetry on recycled paper. It is with these people in mind, as well as those who still haven't kicked the inline skating habit, that cities have parks.

I grew up a mere 20-minute bus ride from New York City. There's no grass on Broadway. There's no grass in Red Hook. With the exception of Yankee Stadium's outfield, there's no grass in the Bronx.

There is grass, however, in Central Park. There are also trees and lakes. There are people skating and others reciting mindless poetry to passers-by. This is what parks are for. This is where these things belong.

Downtown Columbia is not without parks. Riverfront Park and Finlay Park are two perfectly good places to sit in the grass, walk your dog, throw a Frisbee or merely sit under a tree and ponder the greater things in life, such as why we are here, what the meaning of life is and where to get drunk this weekend.

On top of the parks, USC has its own aesthetically pleasing area right on campus. The Horseshoe is chock full of grass and trees. It is the perfect place to lay in the grass reading Emily Dickinson or hand out flyers calling for a halt to animal testing. With its old buildings and brick walkways, the Horseshoe is the most beautiful part of campus.

But the Horseshoe should be the only beautiful part of campus. USC is in a city. If you wanted to live on a campus full of weeping willows, wild flowers and ponds,

you shouldn't have chosen a school in a city. Clemson may have been a better choice for you. They have plenty of grass. James Madison University is a beautiful campus. Stockton College, in New Jersey, is right in the middle of the Pine Barrens State Park. You know what these schools have in common?

They aren't in cities.

There are more than 23,000 students at USC. Add to that faculty members and city residents, and you've got a lot of cars. Finding a parking space was difficult last year. This year, it's damn near impossible. I wonder how much money the university and the city have made this semester from parking tickets. I'm willing to bet it's more than last semester. That also leads me to wonder whether the addition of green space had less to do with the beautification of the city and more to do with making money.

Whatever the motive, the grass needs to go. We're all used to seeing cars illegally parked outside Patterson and South Quad. It won't belong before we start seeing cars pulled up on the lovely green space with their flashers on.

THE HUMAN CONDITION

Sometimes there are no strings attached

I've taken notice to something lately that is leaving me with doubts about the state of humankind.



Pete Johnson is a senior journalism major. He writes every Friday. He can be reached at gamecockviewpoints@hotmail.com

First of all, most people act like the words "human" and "kind" are two entirely separate entities that don't belong together. The more I've grown, the more I've noticed how most people would prefer to keep on their toes in the presence of other people.

I don't know whether it's because we've all had more than a few experiences with an overly aggressive homeless person hounding us for change in our lifetimes, or if it's just a general mistrust of our fellow man.

You're probably wondering right now what led me to this thought. Well, I had the pleasure of taking a road trip to Athens, Ga., to see one of my favorite bands, the Flaming Lips, play Saturday night. It was incredible, and I probably sweated off a pound or two. I was even a bit wobbly while leaving the steamy, smoky confines of the 40-Watt Club. I needed refreshment in the form of water, and I needed it badly.

While walking to my car with my three compatriots, there just happened to be a man standing on a street corner telling all the passers-by that he had free water for them. Naturally, when I first heard the phrase "free water," I simply assumed that I had misheard the gentleman. He surely wanted a handout. Well, he didn't, and if I told him what my first inclination was, he would have probably instructed me to never call him Shirley.

We four rounded the corner and came to a screeching halt when we realized this was no gimmick. This man was simply a good Samaritan trying to see that everyone got home safely. Upon handing us the water, he even told us to drive safely. That was that. All he wanted to do was look out for his fellow man.

He wasn't handing out religious pamphlets; he wasn't asking for money for a bus fare or for a sandwich. He was just a kind human being.

We thanked him and stood there drinking the water for about a minute as others walked by. He made the same offer to each of them, but nobody stopped. He didn't once receive a "no, thank you," or even a smile. All of these people obviously didn't trust him. With today's paranoid attitude that everyone is out to get us for everything we're worth, we've lost sight of one of the most basic of all human emotions: kindness.

When did we forget how to recognize this emotion? Was it after a few encounters with that disorderly bum or that religious zealot? I, too, have lost that feeling. I realized that I had ignored what I had plainly heard — "free water" — as something that was obviously too good to be true. Well, it wasn't, and "humankindness" is something more of us should practice at least occasionally.

Many of you probably think I'm a hippie or something, but I'm just a man who has come to realize this is more than just a mistrust of others; it is a flaw in the system to allow our defenses to be fine-tuned this way.

In this day and age, most people think nothing is free. Well, I can point out your mistakes. Not much is free, but what matters will always be free. Fresh air, sunshine, smiles — all free. If you can't read that last sentence without cringing or muttering a snide comment, good luck, brother. You might already be beyond help.

Although the Flaming Lips put on possibly the best concert I've ever seen, the most important thing I saw that night was this man, standing on the street corner, displaying to everyone his "humankindness."

LETTERS

Many join Greek life to improve society

To the Editor:

As I stood in front of the South Tower elevator on my hall and read Brock Vergakis' column ["Fining your way to friendship," Oct. 4], I can honestly say I became quite upset. His comment stating that people don't join fraternities and sororities to "make great contributions to society," but would rather "have a good time and make friends" was a little off the mark. Now, we all know that there are those out there that join Greek organizations to go to parties and to meet someone of the opposite sex, but I believe the incidence of those people is decreasing. Something that struck me during women's recruitment this year was the fact that these women were asking about philanthropy and academics, not parties and boys. This just proved that the sorority image of "ditzzy party-goers" is changing. A sorority is a great place to make friends and contribute to society, whether now or in the future.

As I continued to read, Mr. Vergakis' point was revealed — sororities fine members. My sorority is one of those that does not fine for any reason whatsoever. These girls have already paid their dues and should not be assessed further. Each girl should get out of the sorority what she wants. If she chooses not to go to a meeting or function because she has a test, has to work, etc., she should not be penalized. However, there are reasons why some sororities fine their members. This sometimes adds an "incentive" for some members to stay involved. Although this may seem severe to some, that is just how some sororities do it. I don't necessarily agree that fining makes sisterhood any less genuine. Ideally, every member would contribute equally, but society as we know it is far from perfect.

Mr. Vergakis did make a good point when stating that perhaps girls should ask about fining when going through re-

cruitment. However, some girls might be hesitant because they may think that it might inhibit their chances of joining a sorority. Girls make a choice whether or not to join a sorority, and if they do, whether or not to be active. In essence, it is their choice to join a sorority that fines and a sorority's choice to fine members. Sisterhood and the bonds it entails hopefully aren't affected by either of the two.

Jenny Shomber
Nursing Senior

Marijuana isn't always the best idea

To the Editor:

I must say I was alarmed at both the tone and content of Patrick Rathbun's column ["Marijuana never gets anyone in a ruckus," Oct. 4]. Mr. Rathbun makes two excellent points: that violence at parties is unfortunate, and that many creative endeavors are intrinsically linked to illicit drug use.

He also makes several naive assumptions. For the past year I managed and worked security at a local night club. Previous to this, I lived with various roommates since my undergraduate years, almost all of whom smoked marijuana regularly. I am well versed in all aspects of the pro-smoke lobby and have spent many a long night in debate, me with my beer in hand, they with their pipe in hand. A polarizing fact: Marijuana is illegal, alcohol is not.

It is unfortunate that Mr. Rathbun was privy to breaking up a fight, but I must say it is obtuse to say this incident "can be blamed on alcohol." I can attest to the fact that breaking up a fight is frightening; my job often required it. I can also attest to many times when I would agree that alcohol "fueled" the confrontation. But the participant, not the bottle of beer I served him, is the cause.

Otherwise, we could merely measure

that magic point that turns the happy bar patron into a raving, aggressive lunatic, and cut him off beforehand. Guys like me, who earn their living handling these unfortunate ruckuses, would be happy to find something else to do for a living. Alcohol contributes, but it is not the cause of violence. It slowly drops one's inhibitions and can let those inner demons out. Those demons have to be there in the first place.

I do not know if Mr. Rathbun has experienced this firsthand, but most times those soulful, meaningful, probing debates around the bong seem pretty silly in the morning; remnants of munchies strewn across the room, red eyes, and a smoker's cough your only reminder. I would say it is unfortunate that anyone would need chemical inducement to enjoy a particular style of music. (I enjoy trip-hop and house music, neither tripping or rolling; I enjoy Phish and Floyd, sans marijuana.)

I am not a proponent of the "Gateway Theory" that smoking a joint will turn you into a junkie, shooting up heroin eventually. I will say that every person I know with a serious drug habit (cocaine, G, Ecstasy) started out with something softer. Marijuana is not a gateway into heavier drug use. The lifestyle of the party, the normalization of what once seemed surreal, is a gateway into heavier drugs. It is unfortunate that anyone would use a chemical crutch as a vehicle for partying. I've been saddened by having to stand by and watch a friend fall slowly into the slippery slope of addiction.

In this day where the president confides to smoking (maybe one day he'll admit to inhaling), and business leaders such as Bill Gates speak with candor about their use of LSD as part of the creative process in youth, it is difficult not to get caught up in the normalization of the counter culture and its ideals. I say all drugs, even the legal ones (alcohol and caffeine) should be consumed with caution.

Brandon Wilson
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