



Viewpoints

Quote, Unquote

'Well, that's what you did with our parents and grandparents — you threw them in the trash.'

Nancy Harler, plaintiff in the lawsuit against USC Medical School

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The Gamecock

MONDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2000

The Gamecock

Serving the Carolina Community since 1908

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Education report gives S.C. some future goals

The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education released report cards for each state in the U.S., and South Carolina has a lot of work to do.

Of the five categories the center gave letter grades for, the biggest cause for alarm comes from the state's inability to prepare its students for the challenges of higher education.

In the area of preparation, South Carolina received a C-. As the report states, "8th graders perform very poorly on national assessments in math, reading and writing, indicating that they are not well prepared for challenging high school courses. A very low proportion of 11th and 12th graders perform well on college entrance exams."

This is cause for great concern. As USC tries to become a more prestigious institution, it will depend on the quality of in-state students. But if South Carolina's schools aren't preparing their students for college or the work force, USC will be facing an incredibly difficult uphill battle and will have to begin recruiting more out-of-state students if it wants to improve its reputation.

Maybe one of the problems is that students don't care to prepare for college because many can't afford to go. South Carolina was given the grade of C for affordability. The financial burden of college is too much for some families to handle in South Carolina, even after financial aid. The report states: "South Carolina requires families to devote a relatively large share of family income, even after financial aid, to attend its public two- and four-year colleges, which enroll 83 percent of the students in the state."

South Carolina has serious problems with its educational system, but we hope the governor, legislature and the commission of higher education look at these findings closely and do everything they can to remedy them. If they don't, it might not be too much longer before we receive a failing grade.

Students should take evaluations seriously

Students who experience feelings of insignificance have an opportunity to have their voices heard. It is time for teacher evaluations, and no matter how many times you might have heard this familiar call to action, it can not be said enough. The evaluations are vital and participation should be high.

Teacher evaluations matter, and they have the potential to impact the professor and the course being evaluated. While students might not see the implications of their evaluations directly, they should still take these evaluations seriously. It is easy to disregard these forms because we don't always see evidence of changes they've made. But they are formal appraisals that are handled officially by the university.

Students should answer the questions honestly and also voice their opinions in the open-ended section of the evaluation form. They should take advantage of the chance to evaluate their courses and express their feelings about the shortcomings and strengths of each course and professor.

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 columnists and can be provided by the submitter.

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THE MAGNUM OPUS

Blame it all on peer pressure

I must first begin by apologizing for not having a column this past Monday.

I deferred to my colleague who wanted to write a column on our football program. I know how distraught you must have been when you didn't see my pretty face on Monday. By the way, do y'all like the new picture? The last one was pretty bad, but it kept me from getting beaten up by all of the people I have alienated this semester because it disguised my true studnicity (whereas the new one shows it in full force) Grr baby, very Grr.

Most of all, I would like to apologize to Ms. Malibu, who wrote a very touching letter to the editor on Wednesday. I did not fully appreciate the epic brilliance of my columns, nor did I realize the true magnitude of the influence my discourses have had on the Carolina Community until I read the passion in Ms. Malibu's letter. Bravo, Ms. Malibu, bravo. I can assure you, Ms. Malibu and others, that I will never abandon my readers again. Ms. Malibu, you are a very talented writer, and maybe you would be so gracious as to consider writing for this newspaper. Greatness like yours is hard to come by.

But enough about y'all, let's talk about me. My Thanksgiving was wonderful, and I hope yours was too. I'll admit I kind of turned it down a notch on the Thanksgiving column. But honestly, Thanksgiving means a lot to me, and I thought I would show a softer side for the ladies (like Ms. Malibu, for example). I wanted to display my literary diversity and maybe make an impact at the same time.

Anyway, on with the show. Because this will be my last column of the millennium (a tear falls), I shall make it my magnum opus (trumpets sound). To conjure up my Muses and get the creative juices flowing, I have decked myself in my full regalia (I'm only wearing socks) and have dined on my personal nectar and ambrosia

(tap water and a Pop Tart). I am now ready.

There is something I have realized this semester. Something I tried to deny. This semester, I have railed against scooter riders, luggage toters and, worst of all, the infamous wankers. I now have a confession to make.

I am a wanker.

That which I decry the most is what I truly am. Long have I tried to deny this, but I now must come clean and confess my sins.

I have been a wanker since last year. Before the current mania over scooters began, I had one. Yes, I am a scooter rider. If I am not riding my beloved scooter, it is safely tucked away in my luggage toter thingy.

I saw all of the little children playing with the scooters, laughing and loving every minute on those well-crafted machines. I said to myself, "I must have a piece of aluminum with handlebars and skateboard wheels attached to it." My scooter completes me. Without it, I am nothing. There is nothing like the cool rush of the air through my willowy wisps of hair. It is so invigorating.

But when I came to school, I heard people taunting scooter riders. At first, I tried to defend them, saying there is nothing wrong with riding a scooter. My friends thought I was a wuss and threatened to beat me up. One of my friends pushed me to the ground and knocked my bookbag off my shoulder. Suddenly, my scooter fell out.

They demanded to know where I got the scooter and questioned whether I was a scooter rider. Knowing my peril, I shrugged it off, saying I stole the scooter from some freshman earlier that day. They were suspicious, questioning my integrity because of the goofy picture that formerly accompanied my columns earlier in the year.

Just my luck, a fellow scooter rider was merrily scootering along, and I jumped on the opportunity to save myself. To prove my masculinity, I told my friends I would spear the next scooter rider who came along. At that time, they noticed the scooter rider and told me to do it.

I dashed out in a full sprint and planted my shoulder just below the scooter rider's armpit. He went sprawling into the holly bushes with an agonizing yelp. He then stared at me defiantly, with a dignity that only scooter riders have. This was

obviously not the first time he had been attacked for riding a scooter. He glared at me proudly, even though he was paralyzed from the neck down. I felt so ashamed to have betrayed a fellow scooter rider and my own values. As I bent over to break off the wheels of his scooter I whispered, "I am sorry, brother."

He looked at me with pain in his eyes and said, "I understand. Go in Peace." Those were his last words. I had killed a fellow scooter rider to save myself. This is the shame I have lived with. Not only that, but to keep my "friends" from ever suspecting my true nature, I began to write disparaging remarks about scooter riders. Soon luggage toters were the butt of my friends' jokes, and I had to lash out against them as well. I had always admired the luggage toters, though, for their tenacity and ability to hunch over and pull the thingy behind them with such grace.

During the school year, I even received a memo from one of my friends saying all the cool people were going back to the two-strap method on the Jansport bookbags. I was saddened because I loved the uneven distribution of weight tugging on one shoulder. The ergonomics of the two-strap method were just ludicrous. But alas, I conformed to the standards of all the cool people and began two-strapping it.

Enough. I finally realized that I could no longer live a lie. I told my friends that I ride a scooter, that I love my luggage toter thingy and that I am a one-strapper at heart. I feared for my life, but I must have my dignity. Instead of beating me to a bloody pulp, my friends just shrugged it off and said if I want to be gay-looking, then that's my problem.

I am a card-carrying member of the United Popular Front of Wankers. I love scooters, luggage toter thingies and one-strapping it. Long have I cried in shame, but now I beam with pride. Who cares if my friends and family have disowned me; that I have been excommunicated from my church and have not been allowed to return to Carolina in the spring? At least I have my dignity and my scooter.

On behalf of Stacy Malibu, my three-year-old niece, the president of the United Popular Front of Wankers, my colleagues Mr. Mouse and Mr. Duck and all the other characters I made up this semester, have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

See you in the next millennium.

CINEMA CULTURE

Hollywood frightening its content too much

Have you seen any good movies lately?

If I were to guess, based on my own recent movie-going experiences, I would say no.

This time last year, I could have rambled off a list of 20 movies I found beautiful, stirring, evocative, or just cool. But 2000 is no 1999.

Majestic love stories like "Magnolia" have ceded to trite and predictable ones like "Bounce." "The Sixth Sense" has been replaced with "Unbreakable," and there is nothing quite like "Boys Don't Cry."

Where is Philip Seymour Hoffman, the scene-stealer of both "Magnolia" and "The Talented Mr. Ripley?"

Maybe I can blame this lack of quality on the fact that our millennial tensions have melted away, or the fact that most people's eyes have been glued to "Road to the White House," as CNN majestically calls it, though it has been more like "Mud Wrestling for the White House."

Really, though, there's no clear comparison between the two years, no real way to say why there's an overabundance of crap being marketed to us.

There's simply been a complete overhaul in the system. The candidates for president, along with their toadying VPs, have joined in condemning Hollywood for its gory and violent fare — basically, they would rather the movies didn't show you real life.

Joe Lieberman, whose tenure in the Senate has included handing out the Silver Sewer Award to artists he believes have polluted the culture, talked about the role of politicians to "nudge" the entertainment industry toward better quality. This is the most terrifying thing I can imagine.

I have no real fear of Congress passing a law that would mandate "cleaner" movies. That would be flagrantly unconstitutional. The real fear is that Hollywood will censor itself, and that its financial and creative control over directors and actors will result in a much more "family" atmosphere.

By "family" atmosphere, I mean what Joe Lieberman means — no "Pulp Fiction," no "Psycho," no "Fight Club," no "Rope," no "Easy Rider," no "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," and definitely no "Clockwork Orange" or "Natural Born Killers" or "Reservoir Dogs."

None of these movies could be made in the current censorious atmosphere, and when the government acts as a disapproving maiden aunt for the entertainment industry, none of them will.

In February, when Oscar nominations are announced, expect to see "Erin Brockovich," a morally upright story in which Julia Roberts' character (who made \$20 million to star in the film) tells a working-class woman whose cancer has invaded her uterus that a civil case settlement of \$3 million "is more than you and your grandchildren will ever need." Expect "Gladiator" — yes, action movies will be nominated. Expect "The Patriot" — yes, dammit, the pickings are that slim. Expect "Pay it Forward" — and choke on the thick sentimentality.

Maybe edgier fare like "Quills" will be acknowledged, but probably not in this climate. At least one acceptance speech will probably feature a nudge in a cleaner direction — further proof that we'll have to wait until this restrictive atmosphere has ebbed to see any good movies.



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December graduates, do you have any parting thoughts?

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